



# Greek Religion and Cults in the Black Sea Region

Goddesses in the Bosphoran Kingdom  
from the Archaic Period to the  
Byzantine Era

David Braund



## GREEK RELIGION AND CULTS IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

This is the first integrated study of Greek religion and cults of the Black Sea region, centred upon the Bosporan kingdom of its northern shores, but with connections and consequences for Greece and much of the Mediterranean world. David Braund explains the cohesive function of key goddesses (Aphrodite Ourania, Artemis Ephesia, Taurian Parthenos, Isis) as the kingdom developed from archaic colonisation through Athenian imperialism, the Hellenistic world and the Roman empire of the east down to the Byzantine era. There is a wealth of new and unfamiliar data on all these deities, with multiple consequences for other areas and cults, such as Diana at Aricia, Orthia in Sparta, Argos' irrigation from Egypt, Athens' Aphrodite Ourania and Artemis Tauropolos and more. Greek religion is shown as key to the internal workings of the Bosporan kingdom, its sense of its landscape and origins and its shifting relationships with the rest of its world.

DAVID BRAUND is Emeritus Professor of Black Sea and Mediterranean History at the University of Exeter. He has spent many decades travelling round and researching the Black Sea region and his publications include *Georgia in antiquity* (1994), *Scythians and Greeks: cultural interactions at the periphery of the Greek world* (edited; 2005), *Classical Olbia and the Scythian world* (co-edited; 2007) and more than one hundred papers.





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Period to the Byzantine Era*

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# CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107182547](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107182547)

DOI: [10.1017/9781316856581](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316856581)

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First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Braund, David, 1957– author.

Title: Greek religion and cults in the Black Sea region : goddesses in the Bosphoran Kingdom from the Archaic period to the Byzantine era / David Braund, University of Exeter.

Description: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018000612 | ISBN 9781107182547 (hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: Goddesses, Greek. | Black Sea Region – Religion.

Classification: LCC BL795.G63B73 2018 | DDC 292.080939/5–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018000612>

ISBN 978-1-107-18254-7 Hardback

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Images are my own, with the following exceptions. I am most grateful to the persons and institutions mentioned: 1–2. M. Yu. Vakhtina, Porthmium expedition, IIMK; 6. The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; 7. V. P. Tolstikov, Pushkin Museum, Moscow; 8. V. A. Kutaisov, Cercinitis archaeological expedition; 9. O. Yu. Sokolova, The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg; 10. N. G. Novichenkova, Yalta Regional Museum; 11 and 18. Classical Numismatic Group Inc. [www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com); 15. V. P. Kopylov, Rostov-on-Don Historical Museum; 16–17. Dr Matthew Shillam; 22. V. N. Zin'ko, Demetra Foundation, Kerch.

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## *Preface*

More than three decades have elapsed since I began the Black Sea History Project, an enormous undertaking, of which this book is the latest creation. As I seek to explain in the Introduction, this book attempts to bridge a range of different divides in the study of the region in antiquity. It also aims to show the benefits of such an attempt for the Black Sea and for the ancient world more generally. In this book I focus upon the roles of principal goddesses and their cults in the coherence of the society and politics of the region, primarily in the Bosporan kingdom. While very many issues are at stake, my central concern is the interface between religion and politics, in the broadest sense, including society, economy and (perhaps most importantly here) the interactions between the Bosporan kingdom and other states around the ancient world. Accordingly, this book looks both at the internal workings of the Bosporan kingdom and at its dealings with the outside world, near at hand and as far away as Massalia and Egypt, for example. Further, in its larger aim at bridging divides, this book shares the overall philosophy of other works written under the aegis of the project, which I set out most explicitly in *Georgia in antiquity* (Oxford, 1994) and exemplified in *The treasures of Zghuderi* (Tbilisi, 2010), co-authored with I. Javakhishvili and G. Nemsadze. Some reflection is in order on progress over the intervening twenty years or so, which has been mixed – for the Project, for Black Sea studies as a whole, and for the shifting context of international relations within which we all live and work. The greatest advances in the ancient Black Sea have been fostered in continental Europe, where old traditions of pure academic research have remained strong and where old ties between west and east had subsisted to form a strong base for new, creative interactions of all kinds, some of them specified in the Introduction. Meanwhile, the academic culture of the Anglophone world has enjoyed little of that, despite some brave efforts. In the UK the ideology of the 1980s has flourished instead, claiming to pursue



excellence in a discourse of business management, from whose varied practice narrowness, dirigisme and short-termism seem to have been the main borrowings.

Accordingly, I am all the more grateful to the few serious students of the Black Sea region in the UK and elsewhere around the English-speaking world, not least for their moral support. Among these I include scholars of different specialisms who are alive to the potential of the region for a better understanding of the ancient world as a whole. In particular, Edith Hall has been a constant inspiration, whether in the UK or around the Black Sea. Over the years, Michael Vickers has been another important figure in my work, not only through his knowledge of material culture and thorough classical training, but also by virtue of his openness to real collaboration, most strikingly achieved at Pichvnari. Dorothy Thompson has been so kind as to give me constructive criticism of the chapter on Isis: she has saved me from more than one mistake. Stephanie West has been a regular source of wisdom, in person and in her writing, even if we often enough find ourselves on different sides of the argument. On matters of religion, I have benefited significantly from discussions with Barbara Kowalzig, in Greece and Russia. In fact, almost all the research and the writing of this book took place in Athens and St Petersburg, with occasional forays to friends in Moscow, Kiev and around the coasts of the Black Sea. Two wonderful libraries have been vital in every sense. Regular visits to the library of the Institute for the History of Material Culture (IIMK) in St Petersburg, together with its astonishing archives, have been productive and enjoyable precisely because its staff have been so very welcoming. The library of the British School at Athens has become my academic home in recent years. Again, its staff embody all the virtues that one hopes to find in the best librarians. It is, above all, these exceptional institutions and the international networks of conferences and the like that have made it possible to write this book. In the UK this serious kind of research environment has become harder to find, but it does subsist in the great centres. As to this book, I have benefited particularly from the courtesy and practical help of staff at the Institute for Classical Studies.

So many individuals have contributed to this book (even if they do not know it) that any list must be inadequate. Therefore, I shall seek to thank others in the context of institutions which have been especially important to me and to this book. In St Petersburg and Crimea, Marina Vakhtina has been a remarkable support and source of advice and constructive criticism. Without her help, I am sure that this book would never have been written (a heavy responsibility!). Her department at IIMK, headed by

Yuri A. Vinogradov, and staffed by other key scholars besides, has opened its doors to me with a rare generosity of spirit, including me even in its internal work-in-progress seminars. Its neighbours have also been very helpful and generous with their time, wisdom and friendship. The remarkable linguist, epigrapher and historian, Sergey Tokhtas'yev, is an ever-present authority in my footnotes, as also are many of the staff of the Hermitage Museum, a truly world-class institution. I cannot specify all my many debts there, but am especially grateful to two of its scholars. First, Andrey Alekseyev, who has been overwhelmingly generous in his scholarship and in practical help, despite the fact that his broad Scythian concerns are often centred away from my primarily classical work, and amid many more pressing duties. Second, Olga Sokolova, by whose kind permission I have been able closely to study the remains of Nymphaeum, where she directs the important Hermitage expedition. A special word is also needed in acknowledgement of the series of conferences in St Petersburg under the title, *The Bosporan Phenomenon*, published by its key organisers. Together these papers form an extraordinary resource for the study of the Bosporan kingdom in all its aspects, so that it will recur through my footnotes.

Moscow has also been very important to this book and to my work in general. My first visit to much of the northern Black Sea was made in the company of Sergey Saprykin, Professor of Ancient History at Moscow State University. As so often, our friendship has made it possible and enjoyable to maintain discussions and ongoing disagreements over many years. Much the same may be said of his wife, Natalya Bylkova, whom I first met in the fine museum of Kherson. Another old friend, Aleksandr Maslennikov, is a towering presence at the Institute of Archaeology in Moscow, as also in the field in the Crimea. I shall always see him in the context of the wild and stunningly beautiful north-eastern coast of the Crimea. He is principal editor of *Drevnosti Bospora (Antiquities of the Bosporus)*, arguably the most important periodical for the region. Moscow is also the base of the remarkable team which excavates at the huge site of Phanagoria on the Taman peninsula, led by Vladimir Kuznetsov, whom I first met in 1988 in the Moscow winter. His team boasts all the skills, including the historian Aleksey Zavoykin and epigrapher Natalya Zavoykina, who together first showed me a large portion of the peninsula. From time to time, I have had valuable visits to the Pushkin Museum and to the Museum of History, whose Denis Zhuravlyov has given me important help with publications. On the Pushkin Museum's major discoveries at Panticapaeum I have much to say in the Introduction, but I wish also to take this opportunity to thank Vladimir Tolstikov, the expedition-leader, for his help in a range of

matters over the years. Also to be thanked is Aleksandr Podosinov, who maintains in Russia the highest standards of classical philology, together with philologist colleagues, especially in St Petersburg (among whom Natalya Pavlichenko has been notably helpful to me). Moscow is also the home of the venerable *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii* (*Journal of Ancient History*), to whose editorial team I am proud to belong. I am also extremely grateful to its chief editor, Askold Ivantchik (CNRS, Bordeaux, and Academy of Sciences, Moscow), who has been a constant source of support and informed debate.

In Kiev I am indebted to Sergey Kryzhitskiy<sup>†</sup> and his classical colleagues at the National Academy of Sciences, notably Alla Buyskikh, Sergey Buyskikh and Marina Skrzhinskaya, as well as several Scythologists, most notably Yuri Boltryk and Nadya Gavriilyuk. Tetiana Shevchenko gave valuable help at the Museum of the Institute of Archaeology. This key research group has also lost two close friends, prematurely deceased: their help was fundamental to all my dealings with the Black Sea region. Vitaliy Zubar worked hard to feed my hunger for literature, while Valentina Krapivina always showed me the unfailing kindness that went with her powerful intellect and genuine love for her students and her subject, especially Olbia, where I first found her – characteristically – surrounded by adoring canines. Our field has been robbed of some of its very best in recent years. Further south again, I have spent many happy and fruitful times in Kerch, ancient Panticapaeum, with its two principal institutions. I am very grateful to friends at Kerch Museum (including its breathtaking epigraphic collection) and also to the Demetra Foundation, directed by Viktor Zinko, who has always made me feel very welcome at its regular conferences. This has brought me important friendships, not least with Yevgeniy Molev and Natalya Moleva of Nizhniy Novgorod University, one of a chain of important institutions along the Volga. Elsewhere around the Crimea, I have often benefited too from colleagues at Khersonesos (Sevastopol') and Simferopol', where I am especially indebted to Valentina Mordvintseva and Yuri Zaytsev. In Yalta, Natalya Novichenkova has also been most helpful, as has Vadim Kutaisov in Yevpatoria (ancient Cercinitis). Across the Sea of Azov, I am grateful also to Viktor Kopylov, who has been unfailingly generous over the years, not least in showing me the rich archaeology in and around ancient Tanais (Rostov-on-Don).

This lengthy list could, and probably should, have been much longer. The academic world of Black Sea antiquity brings with it friendship and mutual support from scholars across many countries, besides Russia and Ukraine. Denmark has been central, through the Black Sea Centre (no

longer with us: its director, my friend Pia Guldager Bilde being another premature loss) and the individuals who created or came out of it. Among these, I owe a series of debts to Vladimir Stolba, and not only in matters of numismatics. In France and Germany, there are debts of all kinds, which cannot be acknowledged in detail, but some scholars here have left a particular impression on my work, including Alexandru Avram, Balbina Baebler, Claire Barat, Gaelle Coqueugniot, Anca Dan, Pierre Dupont, Yvon Garlan and Heinz Heinen, who also left us far too early, albeit with his excellent former students, notably Victor Cojocaru (Romania) and Altay Coskun (Canada). Also in Germany, Mikhail Treister has been particularly generous with his remarkable knowledge, particularly on metals of the region. Patric-Alexander Kreuz has been another inspiration, and good companion in Russia. The appearance of his great study of Bosphoran tombstones and the like has given me an extra spur towards finishing this book. More recently, I have begun to appreciate the west coast of the Black Sea much more, thanks to Alexander Minchev and Yulia Valeva, who in their different ways (together with Elias Petropoulos and Consuelo Manetta) have given me a stronger sense of Balkan-Pontic continuities, which is all the clearer from a base in Athens, where there is a constant flow of rare individuals in all fields. Among those who have helped this book in various ways, I thank especially Theodora Jim, Konstantinos Kalogeropoulos, Stephen Lambert, Vassiliki Machaira, Jeremy McInerney, Ben Millis, Cathy Morgan, Olga Palagia, Chryssanthi Papadopoulou, Robert Pitt, Linda Talata and Alexandra Villing. With these I may bracket also Dominique Kassab Tezgör, Alfred Twardecki and Maya Muratova (a north Pontic specialist in the USA on the Pushkin team at Panticapaeum, *rara avis*). In Australia (and, at times, Exeter) Matthew Shillam not only got me thinking harder about the Augustan kings, but also supplied me with information on Bosphoran coins.

Despite all this help, I have no doubt that this book contains imperfections, errors and omissions, for books always do in some degree. All responsibility for these remains with me. However, I also hope that this book may escape the (very occasional) travesty which *Georgia in antiquity* suffered, whether through ignorance, malice or both. Before denouncing omissions, I hope that critics might at least consult the index, if they cannot read the book. As for errors, critics might also consider whether their notional error is in fact a different point of view: here, consultation of footnotes may assist, as well as my attempt to elucidate recurrent methodological issues in the Introduction. No doubt this book will also face bewildering (and yet now strangely familiar) complaints from some

that I refer to work in languages which they cannot read. In truth, I have often given undue prominence to such studies as may exist in English, while taking into account my position on plagiarism (as set out in the Introduction), which reduces their number a little. At the same time, I am sure too that readers committed to nationalist agendas of various kinds will find much to denounce, whether in toponyms (a favourite focus) or in some more dastardly form. Throughout this book, in fact, I have found it easy to ignore all demands from the scourge of nationalism, from whatever source. I have simply used toponyms and the like in the forms in which they are most frequently employed among scholars everywhere. (It is transliteration that remains the greater problem.) I wholly resile from any attempt to use antiquity in support of claims about the world today, for these are invariably bogus and dangerous.

Finally, on happier matters, I wish to thank (and also apologise to!) those of my students and colleagues at Exeter who have been willing to engage with my curious obsessions over the years: they have contributed a lot to this book. I am very grateful also to Fritz Graf, who made a series of valuable observations on the full text, which have certainly brought improvements. Michael Sharp and his colleagues at CUP have shown a depth of interest in this book that is not always evident in the world of academic publishing: I am most grateful to them for their labours. My brilliant friend Robert Pitt not only proofread and indexed the book, but also helped me with specific issues of content, not least epigraphy. In sum, the writing of this book has been sometimes a pain and largely a joy; I shall be more than satisfied if the reading of it proves to be much the same experience.



Map 1 Key locations in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions



Map 2 Key locations on the north coast of the Black Sea



## *Introduction: Aims, Contexts and Connectivity*

The Bosphoran kingdom was an extraordinary phenomenon, located at the north-eastern periphery of Greek culture. It emerged from the extended process of Greek settlement in the Black Sea region, which was evidently in train from the seventh and even eighth century BC, the beginnings of archaic Greek history. While a later chronology has been normative and fills the handbooks, archaeological progress at Panticapaeum in particular demonstrates the weakness of the inferences from archaeological chance upon which the much-repeated chronology has been built. The recent discoveries of V. P. Tolstikov and his team from the Pushkin Museum, on the upper portion of its acropolis, have shifted the foundation date of Panticapaeum back about a century, to c. 650 BC or a couple of decades later, with substantial construction and defensive walling. Imported pottery places the redating beyond reasonable doubt. We can only wonder how much earlier further work may take us. Meanwhile, philological efforts to deny written evidence of these early years in the story of Greek settlement around the Black Sea have served a useful purpose, but have themselves depended upon a series of unwarranted assumptions, not least about the archaeology.<sup>1</sup> Happily, chronology in itself has never been a key part of the present enquiry. However, it is worth highlighting this major new development from the first, because it illustrates so much about the nature of the study of the ancient Black Sea more generally. For modern scholarship on the region features recurrent encounters between accumulated scholarly

<sup>1</sup> See Tolstikov (2015) on earliest Panticapaeum; cf. Samar and Astashova (2015) and Tugusheva (2015) on early ceramics (with abstracts in English). On the literary tradition and the problems of the scholar's quest for beginnings, see Braund (2005c); Ivantchik (2017). The wonderful catalogue of a major Bosphorus exhibition in Moscow (Kuznetsov and Tolstikov 2017) appeared as this book went to press: it contains a host of material touching on the themes of this book (often well illustrated for the first time), and offers further lines of enquiry, e.g. Pharnaces' dedication (probably) to Artemis (not identified as Ephesia: CIRB 28), as well as bibliography on a range of hypotheses that have not been pursued in detail here.

traditions (entailing assumptions of all kinds) and the present readiness to raise and follow questions. In a sense, of course, that is characteristic of all research. However, in the Black Sea world the creative process has all but caught fire, so that over the last few years the Bosporan kingdom has come to look very different – even in its physical geography – from the place we imagined only a decade or two ago. In particular, geophysical examination (coring, especially) of the Taman peninsula, across the water from Panticapaeum, has given a strong picture of the watery environment there, possibly entailing even opportunities for passage by water between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov that were distinct from the major thoroughfare past Panticapaeum.<sup>2</sup>

The Greeks who came into the region were commonly from cities which had their own colonial pasts. Miletus played a leading role: this was an achievement in which the city later took a particular pride, which could entail notions of military conquest, divine mission and a major contribution to the expansion of Greek culture, and even more besides.<sup>3</sup> However, settlers came from other places in the eastern Aegean too – for example, from the island of Lesbos, and from Teos, which itself claimed origins in far-off Thessaly, from which the Argo had come to open up the Black Sea.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, settlers also came direct from mainland Greece, as the Megarians in particular are said to have come, either alone or in company with others, such as Boeotians.<sup>5</sup> Already in the archaic period, therefore, the picture of settlement around the Black Sea is crowded with Greeks of different origins, each with their own particular local traditions – in religion as in much else. Indeed, when we bring into that picture also the many settlers about whom we know nothing and also the many traders and other itinerants who came and went, together with the secondary settlements that were established from earlier Greek foundations, then the crowd of different Greeks threatens to become a disordered mob, until we realise too that their ventures were dwarfed by the local populations already to be found around the Black Sea, as well as other non-Greeks who were drawn there besides. For the establishment and development of these various settlements was by no means only a matter of Greek action

<sup>2</sup> Schlotzhauer and Zhuravlev (2014); cf. Zhuravlev and Schlotzhauer (2016). The present study does not require any close assessment of these important findings, but the maps shown here are broadly conservative. Cf. Buynevich (2017).

<sup>3</sup> Milesian epigraphy indicates also the importance of all this for interstate relations centuries later: e.g. *I.Milet.* 1. 3. 155 (especially on the Hellespont and Propontis) and in general, Jones (1999).

<sup>4</sup> With consequential notions of Thessalian links e.g. with Phanagoria: Braund (2014a).

<sup>5</sup> On Megarian overseas settlements, see Robu (2014) and, still more broadly, Malkin (2011).

and agency. These inchoate settlements lived or died primarily according to their (in)ability to build relationships with non-Greeks around them, whether agriculturalists or nomads or some mix of the two. The contribution of these neighbours is most obvious through the fact that the various Greek settlers were overwhelmingly male, as far as we can judge. These men took their women from among others in the region, through agreement, purchase or violence. The outlook of the women involved is unknown to us, but we need not assume their unwillingness, or that they may not have on occasion played proactive roles in the process.

In consequence, while these Black Sea cities (like the cities from which they sprang) developed their own histories as grand tales of Greek innovation, the reality was clearly much less epic and rather less Greek. Greek arrivals to the challenging new environment of the Black Sea, as elsewhere in colonial history, needed at least acquiescence and probably some active support from the natives of the place. Accordingly, despite the self-consciously Greek identities of these colonial communities, we may in principle suspect that there were significant non-Greek contributions to their various histories and societies. Certainly, Greeks of the Mediterranean were quick enough to believe that there was something not entirely Greek about these Pontics. As we shall see, that sense of alienation between Greeks of different regions meant that there was sometimes a dark side to the connections that were made between the Black Sea region and cults of the Mediterranean world, which are most striking in the case of Parthenos – a constructively martial deity for Greeks in the Crimea, but imagined among Greeks elsewhere as a source of ghastly rites, surrounding especially the human sacrifice of Greeks themselves to a barbarian monstrosity. We shall see how colonisation, and indeed colonialist ideology, offered a means by which such awkward contradictions might be resolved, if not completely – for different places had different needs, while transregional inconsistency was usual enough across Greek culture, not least in Greek religion and cults. Throughout this book we shall have cause to return regularly to ancient and modern obsessions with ethnicity, including the familiar (and often misguided) assumption of hostility between Greek and non-Greek, as well as (also sometimes misguided) assumptions of friendship and cooperation between the various Greeks of the Black Sea region, who could and did go to war with each other.

It was from these complex and rather hazy beginnings (for it is the nature of beginnings to recede as we approach) that the Bosporean kingdom took shape around a ruler based at Panticapaeum (modern Kerch) in the eastern Crimea. In all likelihood the most important moment in the formation

of the kingdom was the establishment of the Spartocid dynasty, which would rule in the Bosphorus from the 430s BC until its replacement by Mithridates VI Eupator at the end of the second century BC. However, we cannot pretend to have much knowledge of their predecessors, the so-called Archaeanactids, whose collective name might suggest earlier coalescence of the Bosphoran communities, whether they each had realms at the same time or were a dynasty represented by a single monarch. Certainly, Diodorus seems to consider them kings, in whichever sense.<sup>6</sup> Already in the fifth century BC the Bosphoran ruler's authority extended not only along the eastern Crimea, but also across the straits on the Taman peninsula. For the geography of the kingdom was remarkable, as we have begun to see. It will be a recurrent issue in this book. For the Straits of Kerch (known in antiquity as the Cimmerian Bosphorus) constituted a swathe of sea water that ran broadly north–south through the centre of the kingdom. On the Crimean side of these waters, the Greek settlements occupied the best sites at the coast itself. Their orientation on the straits should not be obscured by their use of the near hinterland, nor by the kingdom's ambitions to control the whole of the Crimea, including the city of Chersonesus at its south-west tip and the local peoples of the more southerly parts of the Crimean peninsula, whom the Greeks often called Taurians. Meanwhile, to the east of the straits lay another environment, dominated by the Greek settlements of this further shore and by the great and shifting delta of the River Kuban, called Hypanis in antiquity. We have already noted the fruits of recent geographical study in this complex and watery region, the Taman peninsula. Accordingly, with this great bipartite division in mind, modern scholars usually write of the European Bosphorus of the Crimea and the Asiatic Bosphorus of the Kuban delta region, the Taman peninsula. On that usual conception, the Bosphoran kingdom consisted of two parts, divided by the straits, as well as the minor settlements of the Sea of Azov (the ancient Maeotis) to the north, which was dominated by the city of Tanais at the delta of another great river, the Don (the ancient Tanais). In the course of this book we will return frequently to this division, for the two main parts of the kingdom are different in many ways. The Crimean side is drier, quite rocky and rugged, while the Taman peninsula has few elevations (although it is more volcanic): it tended to wetland and had no

<sup>6</sup> Diod. 12. 31. 1 has them rule as kings, but this is almost all we have on them and can hardly be pressed. The name ('Ancient Lords' Dynasty?') might well be a creation of the Spartocid centuries, though other explanations are conceivable, including possible claims by these 'kings' to descent from the founders perhaps simply an Archaeanax; cf. Shelov-Kovedyayev (2013). See further Zavoykin (2013) and Molev (2017).

significant stone of its own, even for crude buildings. As we shall see, that paucity of stone is most unhelpful for our use of the inscribed and other stones which have survived there from antiquity.

Meanwhile, these physical divisions were accompanied too by divisions in the local populations among whom Greeks had established their communities. Most ancient authors were satisfied with catch-all terms for such peoples: here they were often called Scythians by far-off Greeks, rooted in the Mediterranean and impatient of local circumstances and niceties. Herodotus is a rare example of a Mediterranean author who was concerned to probe beneath vague terminology of this kind – a concern which he demonstrates repeatedly in book 4 of his *Histories*. Together with the geographers (notably Strabo, who died c. AD 25 or so)<sup>7</sup> and the considerable local Bosporean voices that have survived largely through inscriptions and coins, Herodotus reveals that the north Black Sea was a place of many peoples who were in his view not only non-Greek (albeit sometimes partially Greek), but also often non-Scythian in whole or part. For the present study, it is a pity that he had so little to say about the Bosporean kingdom, and almost nothing about those who lived there, Greek or non-Greek. His focus and the evident source of much of his knowledge about the region as a whole was well to the west of the Crimea, at Olbia. There is no reason to suppose that the much-travelled historian ever journeyed as far as the kingdom itself, and he makes no claim to have done so. Since his overwhelming concern was Scythia and Scythian culture, we may find in his neglect of the kingdom reason to suppose that he took it to be distinct from those parts that could be considered Scythian in some sense. For, as we have begun to see, the Bosporean kingdom evidently regarded itself as Greek, and was evidently regarded even by the more doubtful Greeks of the Mediterranean as Greek, even if it occasionally suited Athenian orators to throw Scythian ethnicity at its elite, in much the same way as Athenian comic poets might throw Scythianness also at other Athenians.<sup>8</sup> Again and again, whether in formal inscriptions or in such speeches as Isocrates' *Trapeziticus*, the kingdom appears as nothing other than Greek, however idiosyncratic it may have seemed to the Athenian democracy – itself hardly typical of Greek culture. This was a form of Greek culture that came to

<sup>7</sup> After the death of his associate Juba II in AD 23 or 24: Strabo 17. 3. 7, with admirable remarks by Roller (2014) 15–16, also on the various modern hypotheses as to how and when Strabo wrote his great work, mostly best forgotten.

<sup>8</sup> Demosthenes' descent from a lady of the region caused him to be characterised as a Scythian: e.g. Aeschin. 2. 173 and pp. 196 and 260 below on Bol'shaya Bliznitsa. We cannot use such rhetoric to mine hard data, as Müller (2010) desires.

resemble the Greek kingdoms that developed elsewhere in the north, in Thrace and in Macedon, while comparisons might also be made – rather earlier – between the Bosporan rulers and the various ‘tyrants’ who ruled on the south Pontic coast or the eastern Aegean, largely under the aegis of Persia. While the Bosporan elite had a certain taste for images of Scythians, that was true of other Greeks too: there is no reason to suppose that any wished to be Scythians or to ape them, any more than to suppose that the wealthy who owned such artefacts desired to have the lives of the ordinary Scythians who were depicted on them. In sum, our evidence is clear (though we can always desire more of it) that the many peoples of the kingdom formed a kingdom which sought to be Greek, using Greek language, calendar, cults and so on. The fact that non-Greek peoples are usually listed in Bosporan inscriptions separately from the core realm, speaks also of abiding distinction and a measure of alienation too: we may observe the general absence from such lists of ‘Scythians’. The steppe-dwellers of the northern Crimea and further afield across the North Caucasian plain were not part of the realm.

The Bosporan kingdom, therefore, encompassed unusual diversity in human and physical geography, so that there was a great potential for fragmentation. That was in addition to the more usual fragility of monarchical systems that arises from the ever-present issue of succession to the throne. Under the Spartocids, Mithridates and the kings who ruled thereafter as friends of the Roman empire, there was a sustained threat of local uprisings among Greeks and non-Greeks alike, which sometimes led to actual conflict, with or without the larger context of a struggle for succession. Diodorus gives a fairly detailed account of the fighting between brothers that brought King Eumelus to power for a short reign towards the end of the fourth century BC.<sup>9</sup> There would be other such warfare, notably the conflict between the brothers Cotys and Mithridates for rule under Claudius, and there were doubtless lesser conflicts at the time of other successions, about which we hear little or nothing.<sup>10</sup> The important point, however, is that the kingdom persisted. The fourth and third centuries BC were an era of wealth and prosperity in the Bosphorus, or so archaeology seems consistently to suggest. The kingdom had its difficulties, including threats from the interior, even if the significance of these is sometimes overstated. Mithridates Eupator saved the kingdom from invaders, it seems, as he did elsewhere for Greek communities across the northern

<sup>9</sup> Diod. 20. 22–4.

<sup>10</sup> On Cotys I, see [Chapter 4](#).

Black Sea – or so his supporters said. And much of that role was taken over by Rome after Eupator committed suicide in Panticapaeum itself in 63 BC. With Roman support, which came to involve even the regular provision of subsidies, the kingdom persisted strongly into the third century AD, when Roman help was no longer available, sufficient and reliable.<sup>11</sup> The kingdom had persisted for centuries, despite its apparently disjointed nature. The kings who ruled there from Augustan times onwards (Asander, Aspurgus and the rest) were, by and large, at least as successful as their Spartocid predecessors. They were extraordinarily and consistently, as we shall see, assiduous in cultivating and demonstrating a special bond with Rome, its emperors and its imperial family, not least through religion and cult.<sup>12</sup> However, without imperial support, the kingdom was unable to resist the Goths and Huns who seem finally to have brought it to an end in the later fourth century AD. In the course of the many centuries before its demise, however, the potential for fragmentation had somehow been controlled and the kingdom had remained coherent and successful, albeit with some help in its harder times. A central contention of this book is that the religion and cults of the kingdom played vital roles in that survival and success, with Aphrodite Ourania very much to the fore.

It is easy to perceive the very straits themselves as a major factor in the kingdom's vulnerability to disintegration. Certainly, the straits did constitute a real physical barrier to movement by land between the two principal parts of the realm. However, as often with waterways, the straits brought also substantial opportunities. For, as we have seen, the main cities of the kingdom sat around the waters like Plato's 'frogs and ants around a puddle' (*Phaedo* 109b, of the Black Sea Greeks, as well as their Mediterranean cousins). In that sense, we must understand the straits not only as a barrier through the kingdom, but as its central focus from west and east alike. It no doubt helped that for much of their length the straits were no great barrier to intervisibility, while particular crossing points were favoured, as we shall see. One settlement, Porthmium, to the north of Panticapaeum, bears a name (roughly 'Ferry-crossing') that expresses its command of such a crossing, which was key to its very existence: it is no accident that the modern ferry still departs from very close by the remains of the ancient town. We hear enough in our ancient sources to make it clear that these waters were thronged with shipping of all kinds, moving up and down the coasts, cutting to and fro across the straits and making

<sup>11</sup> Such is broadly Zosimus' analysis, at least: Zos. I. 31.

<sup>12</sup> On imperial cult in the Bosphorus, see below pp. 251–55.



the longer transit north and south between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, the ancient Maeotis. In antiquity, as sometimes now, this was a packed seascape, akin to the busy waterway of the better known (Thracian) Bosphorus by Byzantium, where too we see settlement clustered on each shore and the benefits of the waterway for all. Meanwhile, we shall also see that pastoralists could and did find their way across this barrier between the Crimea and the Taman peninsula, even on a regular basis. For to the frequent consternation of others, nomads require strategies and equipment to enable the crossing of waterways. While Greek writers at a distance from the reality might contemplate stories of mud-deposits and, especially, ice, nomads and their neighbours (Greeks or not) were well aware of this ingenuity.<sup>13</sup>

In this book these broad historical, socio-political and economic contexts will figure at every turn, in whole or in part. For we shall be concerned especially with forms of Artemis (Parthenos and Ephesia) and Aphrodite (Ourania and Isis) in these colonial and other historical processes in the Bosporan kingdom. In each case we shall trace the roles of those deities not only in traditions of settlement in the Bosphorus, but also in the development of the kingdom internally and externally. We shall see that in their different ways these goddesses contributed substantially to the internal cohesion of the kingdom, not least by forming and strengthening bonds across the central straits. While Parthenos dominated to the west, in the Crimea, and Aphrodite Ourania boasted a great sanctuary at Apatouron to the east, both goddesses also reached across the intervening waters, whether alone or in the company of Heracles or Achilles. At the same time, we shall see too how these goddesses helped to build a place for the kingdom in the larger world of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean in general, connecting with Greeks and non-Greeks as far afield as Egypt and Syria to the east and Massalia and Magna Graecia to the west. The goddesses' major contributions to the cohesion and very identity of the Bosporan kingdom will be a recurrent theme in the pages to come.

Very often studies of Greek religion take one of two directions: either they offer an over-arching view of a single deity across an extended chronological and/or geographical portion of antiquity, or they offer a full account

<sup>13</sup> See esp. Vakhtina, Vinogradov and Rogov (1980) and [Chapter 1](#). In a neglected section of his history (i. 104), Zosimus reports a story that the Huns were able to cross the straits because mud from the Tanais had enabled their passage. He knew enough to be suspicious of the tale, though sedimentation and coastal change have certainly been important in the history of the Taman peninsula, as was already understood by the fourth century BC: see Aristotle, *Met.* 353a on accruing silt and reduced navigability in the Sea of Azov: on Aristotle and Olympiodorus in this regard, see Wilson (2013) 173.

of the religion of a particular community or region. The present study has a scope which resembles, at once, both and neither of those alternatives. Here we are concerned with four goddesses, who cluster around the pairing of Artemis and Aphrodite, who tend to be opposites and yet also have so much in common, as we shall see in the Bosphorus. While there will be recurrent engagement with other deities (and, especially, with these deities in other places), this book does not seek to offer an all-embracing study of any of the goddesses in Greek culture as a whole, although it is to be hoped that each chapter may contribute significantly to our larger understanding of them, individually and collectively. At the same time, neither does this book attempt to provide a complete account of the religion of the Bosphoran kingdom *tout court*, which is an impossible task that has already been attempted often enough, as we shall see in the course of this study. Let us be clear from the first, therefore, that this is a book about four connected goddesses, which engages only when necessary and relevant with other Bosphoran deities and cults, and with cults elsewhere in the ancient world. The larger aim is to explore how these goddesses mattered in the Bosphorus and, in particular, the contributions they made at a state level through the long life of the kingdom across a millennium or so. Here the city of Chersonesus requires a special word, because it may be considered both inside and outside the Bosphoran kingdom at different times in its history. However, its distinct identity from the Bosphorus during most of its history means that, although we shall pay considerable attention to this city and its Parthenos, there will be no attempt here to offer a full study of all aspects of the goddess there. In any case, there already exists such a study, to which reference will often be made.<sup>14</sup>

Such fundamentals are best clarified in any introduction, but clarification is all the more required in this book, for reasons which are again best made explicit. An unusual feature of this book is its attempt to bridge the large gap between two scholarly traditions. In 1913, when Ellis Minns produced his extraordinary study of the northern Black Sea and beyond, *Scythians and Greeks*, there were well-established contacts between what we may call the western and eastern traditions in scholarship on the ancient world. In the course of the present book, for example, we shall touch briefly on Arthur Evans' casual allusion to his visit to Kerch, as if it had been a trip to Athens or Cairo. Such contacts have always persisted, but they have been swallowed up for the most part in the ideological, linguistic

<sup>14</sup> Namely, Rusyayeva and Rusyayeva (1999) with extensive bibliography on the large scholarly tradition; cf. Popova (2011).

and geo-political chasm that opened up between these two worlds after the revolution in Russia. Alliance in the Second World War did little or nothing to restore pre-revolutionary norms (reasons need not detain us), but with the break-up of the Soviet Union there came real progress in contact and better mutual understanding among scholars in both traditions. A particular landmark was the energetic activity of the Danish National Research Fund's Black Sea Centre at Aarhus, under the much-missed Pia Guldager Bilde. The volumes it created are fundamental, and freely available online. However, all readers of this book should be aware that the two traditions retain a strong independence, not least in method and bibliography. Language-barriers also subsist, notably in Britain, where the generation that learned Russian in the course of national service has retired or passed on. The most obvious outcome of these abiding problems is that few scholars in the western tradition – especially Anglophones – engage seriously with the Bosporan kingdom, unless it is to include a particular artefact in the study of something else. The various translated Russian works, for example, that have tended to appear in recent years are certainly welcome, but they constitute a tiny fraction of the whole and inevitably rest on a massive tradition to which non-Russianists have access only with great difficulty. Meanwhile, in Russia and Ukraine, where almost all work on the Bosporus has been conducted, there is an understandable tendency to look inwards to home-grown work, centred on studies which have established the norms of that internal tradition. As a result of all this (and more) Minns' great book has had a fate which is at once comic and tragic. Among Bosporan scholars, it is generally regarded with real respect, but it seldom appears in scholarly footnotes and its fundamental contributions hardly figure. In western traditions, where the Black Sea in general is avoided by most specialists in antiquity, Minns' book is hardly known at all, despite the fact that (extraordinary to say) it is undoubtedly one of the greatest scholarly achievements in the study of antiquity. My own straw poll of ten senior UK scholars (specialists in antiquity, but not the Black Sea) revealed that about half had heard of it, but none claimed ever to have opened it. The fate of Minns' book serves to illustrate the persistence of scholarly barriers and even alienation, as well as the strange habit of many Anglophone scholars, above all, of ignoring this large part of the ancient world.

With all that in mind, in writing a book of much more modest ambition than Minns' classic, I am well aware that there will be surprises and complaints alike from each side of this abiding scholarly divide. I have tried to address issues that have been considered important by scholars

in both traditions, some of which may be either alien or baffling to one side or the other. By and large I have followed my own 'western' scholarly tradition (at least among Anglophones) by deliberately not producing epideictic footnotes overflowing with the names of all the scholars who have ever written on any given topic. Instead, while I hope to have read all or most of this huge bibliography, I have confined my references to the studies that contribute specifically to the arguments that I am advancing (whether for or against them), albeit with some favour for the most recent and accessible, on the assumption that those interested in following the scholarly chain to its full extent will avail themselves of the bibliography given by the studies which I have selected for mention. Meanwhile, I should also explain that I have omitted all mention of publications which are associated, in my opinion, with plagiaristic activity, preferring to cite original work and to have regard for a UK academic environment where even undergraduates are severely punished for plagiarism. Throughout, on a more positive note, I have been fortunate indeed in the friends and institutions that have made publications and information of all kinds available to me, and have welcomed me (usually the only Anglophone and sometimes the only foreigner) at their regular conferences. In the Preface I have acknowledged much of this help, but I am aware that I am unlikely to have expressed adequately either the extent or the depth of my gratitude.

I make no apology at all for engaging closely and critically in this book with the ancient texts in the original ancient languages (I supply my own translations, unless otherwise stated). Unlike Minns, many scholars of the Bosporan kingdom today have little or no Greek and less Latin, so that (for example) arguments about the precise meaning of Strabo or Pausanias are attempted on the basis of translations which may or may not be broadly accurate, but which can never convey the original text, as all translators know full well. As I once observed with regard to Roman Britain, it is quite extraordinary that archaeologists (and some historians) who spend so much time and effort on the best methodology in excavation and the like, seem willing to proceed without any serious attention to methodology in the reading and interpretation of texts, for which the basis is a knowledge of the ancient languages and the barest minimum requirement is an understanding of the various kinds of ancient literature and its tendencies. No doubt, the Bosporus is a victim, like the rest of antiquity, of the increasing separation between historical-archaeological and linguistic-literary studies, whereby the former seem now to have nurtured an empiricist renaissance that has scant concern with the careful appreciation of texts, while the latter has passed from obsession with the subversiveness of texts,

through ahistorical deconstruction, and now on to a new obsession with the alleged anxiety of those once-subversive writings. This refashioning of the author and his work, with its shift from brave optimism to confused neurosis tells us a great deal about the modern world in the west (especially from the 1960s to the present), but probably nothing worthwhile about the ancient world. Again one may take a measure of solace in the subtle empiricism of Minns and his best contemporaries.

Archaeology will figure prominently throughout this book, particularly (though not only) that of the Bosporan kingdom. Thanks to some two centuries of intensive excavation by Russian and Ukrainian scholars, a wealth of material has been unearthed, without which this book could never have been attempted. However, let us be clear, too, that this is not a book about archaeology or about its many discoveries. Throughout, I have tried to indicate the larger archaeological picture, and we shall dwell upon the overall contribution of archaeology in the conclusion of this book. However, it has never been my aim or intention to include for its own sake every instance in the region of particular artefacts (earrings, for example) which may feature a particular goddess. These come to light from time to time and can be important,<sup>15</sup> so that on occasion an isolated artefact may demand attention, but it is the wood that concerns me far more than occasional glimpses of a sapling among the principal trees. Even the discovery at Panticapaeum of a glass cup that bears the name of Iphigenia can contribute little to our enquiry, although it may well cause us to reflect on the meaning of its decoration for the Bosporans of the later Roman period who came to own it, and whether they saw it in ways substantially different from the assumptions and attitudes of those who made it, probably in Alexandria. While such isolated artefacts can contribute to a sense of the mythological, dramatic and religious world of the Bosphorus, it remains unsurprising to find major mythological figures, goddesses and the like in the paraphernalia of what was (as we shall see) overwhelmingly a Greek culture in the Bosporan kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

The purpose of this book is to show how our four goddesses, individually and in concert with others, were important in the Bosphorus, so that where a particular piece of jewellery (for example) does no more than show the image of the goddess (frequently, only a female who may be a goddess)

<sup>15</sup> E.g. the semi-naked Aphrodite on an intaglio from Artyushenko-2 (southern Taman), c. 400 BC: Kashayev (2016). Or the isolated graffito, notably SEG 37. 666 (11) with 48. 1006 (giving the date), showing a form of Aphrodite at Myrmecium by c. 450 BC, unsurprisingly. Koshelenko (2010) offers colour illustrations of various artefacts showing deities.

<sup>16</sup> On the remains of this vessel, see Sorokina (1976).

without an important context or consequence, I have sometimes not considered discussion necessary, and have left interested readers to chase up my footnotes. In the same spirit, I have not thought it necessary to litter my text or notes with references to the standard lexica and encyclopedias, for it is obvious that LIMC (for example) will be relevant at every turn. Such works are cited explicitly only where there is special reason to do so. The aim here is analysis, not the gathering of stuff in the hope of brute completeness. However, more happily, those readers who may seek such completeness for whatever reason, should find in this book a route to its attainment through my references to the work of others.

Accordingly, this book will focus sharply on the various ways in which forms of Artemis and Aphrodite were key to the Bosphoran kingdom. We shall range between myth and cult, across the complex Bosphoran landscape and through the history of many centuries in the Bosphorus and in the ancient world at large. We shall attempt to achieve a better sense of what these goddesses expressed and contributed within and for the kingdom, its rulers and its wider population, while at the same time retaining a strong sense of their polyvalent force and meanings in the Bosphorus and beyond. After all, and as we shall see, these goddesses are not so much opposites (as often imagined), but forms of the divine which can also share concerns, outcomes and much else. Since they will always attract attention, it is to be hoped that, by examining these goddesses together from a Bosphoran perspective and within a single framework, this book may even cause a few more scholars to venture from their Mediterranean ‘homes’ to settle even briefly in the scholarly world of the Black Sea. As one reflects on the vigorous recent work in the region itself, and the energetic involvement of the splendid new generation of scholars – especially from France and Germany, but also elsewhere across continental Europe – it is possible even to imagine that more Anglophones might appreciate how much they could learn and achieve in the Bosphoran kingdom and elsewhere around the Black Sea. There are already a few recent examples to follow.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, therefore, this is a book about connections and connectivity, principally in three senses. First, the contributions of Greek religion and cults to the cohesion of the Bosphoran kingdom, with its particular tendencies to fragmentation. Second, the roles of these religious phenomena in the development of important connections between the Bosphoran kingdom, the rest of the Black Sea region and the world beyond, from

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Meyer (2013), or the papers collected in Braund, Hall and Wyles (*forthcoming*). In the USA, note also Kozlovskaya (2017).

Massalia and Rome to Syria and Egypt, via Athens, Sparta, Argos and other cardinal locations around the ancient world. Third, the interplay of these phenomena as a significant contribution to our understanding of the deities themselves, with all that each entails, so that we may enrich our understanding of Aphrodite Ourania, Isis and the rest by incorporating their Bosporan histories into their broader Mediterranean histories, and also, crucially, vice versa. For the Bosporan case(s) and the wider stories of these deities and their cults, will prove to be mutually enlightening. And that, it need hardly be said, is another reason why neglect of the Black Sea world is unconscionable.

As with Greek cults and religion elsewhere around the ancient world, we shall find the interplay of the more local and the more general, wherein local or regional 'versions' of a deity (and all that the deity entails) may or may not readily accord with or map onto the shared Mediterranean and Pontic pool(s) of ideology, while they are most unlikely to escape conflict and contradiction with regard to some other local 'versions'. From the first we shall see, for example, the enormous gulf between the Parthenos of the Crimea and the different 'versions' of her – not least as Tauropolos – that proliferate elsewhere. More difficult to trace, however, is change over time. In broad terms we can see how Aphrodite Ourania, for example, might have significantly different roles across time. In whatever ways we imagine her part in the early development of colonial settlement on the north coast of the Black Sea, we may agree without much difficulty that she had rather different role(s) in the Bosporus when it came under the *de facto* control of Roman rulers who traced their own origins to a form of Aphrodite. The details, however, remain elusive, largely because of the fragmented nature of our information. Fortunately, our lack of detail about change(s) can be accommodated within this book, whose thrust is towards the continuities that evidently predominated in Bosporan religion (as usual in all aspects of antiquity) and which, as will be argued, held this diverse realm together.



*Crimean Parthenos, Artemis Tauropolos and  
Human Sacrifice*

The goddess Parthenos is a deity who is as elusive as she is important in the history of the ancient Crimea and beyond. Perhaps our best literary authority on her Crimean cult – the geographer Strabo – designates her simply as ‘a certain deity’. Outside the region, we sometimes also find a deity named Parthenos, as we shall see. However, in Greek culture generally the Crimean Parthenos is regularly identified with Artemis in her various forms, including Hekate.<sup>1</sup> As we shall see, Crimean Parthenos is often enough also imagined as the prototype and source of specific cults of that goddess, in Athens, Sparta and elsewhere besides, as far afield as Italy and the Levant. We are simply not told what notions were also current about links between Crimean Parthenos and other deities called Parthenos, even though these were very much local cults. Meanwhile, among literary and artistic creations in her regard, Euripides’ play, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, has done most to explore the notion that her cult in some sense came into the Mediterranean world from the Crimea. However, we must be clear from the first that this play offers only glimpses of a specifically Athenian tradition, providing aetiological explanations for Athenian cults at Brauron and nearby Halae Araphenides in particular.<sup>2</sup> The play was certainly influential through antiquity. However, for all its undoubted importance for late fifth-century Athens and as a canonical work of Greek culture, its significance is not to be overstated: we shall see that the appeal of the Crimean deity across the Mediterranean arose from a much wider set of concerns and traditions, of which the famous play was only part.

The first purpose of this chapter is to establish the significance of Parthenos in the Crimea itself. There, we shall see, that she ranged much

<sup>1</sup> Diod. 4. 45 even has a Hekate as cruel daughter of Perses, whom she poisoned and replaced as ruler of Crimea, building a temple of Artemis there and testing her poisons on strangers.

<sup>2</sup> We shall see that there is every reason to consider this aetiology older than Euripides, though the claim that it is Euripidean invention has been remarkably popular.

more widely than has usually been understood, as also indeed did the Taurians who worshipped her. Within the Crimea, our particular focus will be her place in the Bosporan kingdom, which has rarely been considered, for we are much better informed about her role elsewhere in the Crimea, in the city of Chersonesus. In the Bosporus the goddess emerges as a key figure, not least as Iphigenia. And in the sacred geography of the region we find her importantly connected with cults of Achilles, both in the Bosporus and in Chersonesus, which cherished her as its protectress. By contrast, in the Greek world at large, we shall trace the various claims to connections with the Crimean deity, and we shall explore the rationale and functionality of those various claims. In the course of that discussion we will come to understand the yawning gap that existed through antiquity between many of the notions of Parthenos fostered in this extended Greek world and the cult of the goddess in the Crimea itself. Ultimately, however, we shall also see that this gap was not unbridgeable or unbridged, particularly when Crimean Greeks interacted with the cults and ideas of their Mediterranean counterparts.

From the outset, it must be stressed that in the Crimea Parthenos appears simply under that name: she is not Artemis there or Artemis Parthenos or anything of the kind. As we shall see in the [next chapter](#), there was many a deity around the Greek world known locally as Parthenos, with and without connections to the major virgin goddesses, Artemis and Athena.<sup>3</sup> In Chersonesus, in particular, Artemis herself is strikingly absent not only from the considerable number of its public inscriptions, but also from private dedications, graffiti and the like, where she is very hard to find too.<sup>4</sup> Her iconography at Chersonesus shows much that recalls Artemis (deer, bow, etc.), but it has been shown too that this iconography is substantially different, even so, from that of Artemis found around the Mediterranean world.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, Parthenos in the Crimea is never Tauropolos either, for the cult of Tauropolos is nowhere attested either in the Crimea or elsewhere across the north coast of the Black Sea. While Artemis Tauropolos and her festival, the Tauropolia, were of the first importance elsewhere, they are not known to have existed anywhere in our region. As we reflect on these distinctions, we start to understand why the well-informed Strabo refers to Parthenos in Crimean Chersonesus as ‘a certain deity’, despite the

<sup>3</sup> The point is well made by Corsten (2012), esp. 147.

<sup>4</sup> The optimistic inferences of Makarov and Ushakov (2009) do not constitute an exception. There is some sign of Leto, however: see [Chapter 2](#) n. 135.

<sup>5</sup> So Guldager Bilde (2009) 304–5; cf. (2003).



Figure 1 The Bosporan narrows: view of Taman peninsula from Cape Fonar, near Porthmium. © M. Yu. Vakhtina, Porthmium expedition, IIMK

fact that he had close knowledge of cults of Greece, Italy and Asia Minor which claimed to have come from the Crimea. While he wrote about those Mediterranean notions from case to case, Strabo knew very well that inside the Crimea she was Parthenos, both at Chersonesus and in the Bosporan kingdom. Finally, in the Bosphorus, we must observe too how closely the goddess is bound up with the Taurians, whose culture is traceable into the Bosporan kingdom. Indeed, we shall see that Parthenos simply does not occur anywhere in our sources in the Asiatic Bosphorus across the straits from the Crimea.

### **Bosporan Parthenos: Porthmium and Parthenium**

In the Crimea itself, Parthenos is especially associated with the city of Chersonesus, as we shall see. However, we are beginning to appreciate her significance also in the Bosporan kingdom, which, despite recurrent conflicts, had much in common with Chersonesus. First, some complex matters of topography require explanation.

The modern village of Zhukovka, with adjacent Port Krym, stands at the Crimean end of the ferry crossing to and from the Taman peninsula opposite. On most days the coasts here are intervisible, separated by a stretch of water that is both narrow and relatively shallow. The crossing was already much in use as early as our evidence allows. For the site near Zhukovka was settled in the sixth century, centred on a low acropolis and with significant defensive walling, as had too the contemporary settlement at Myrmecium to its south.<sup>6</sup> Zhukovka was attractive enough in terms of agriculture and the like, of which there is an array of evidence in the material record, but it was the crossing that made the place special. For it is clear enough that many passed that way throughout antiquity, not least in the course of their pastoral movements.<sup>7</sup> Pastoralists had strategies for crossing water with their herds, not only through the use of local boats or use of the ice in a hard winter, but also through exploiting available fords, narrow points and shallows, and by carting equipment that could be put to that purpose. Usually, our classical sources only take a close interest in these matters when these movements amounted to a military threat, as with Priscus' account of the rafts carried by Attila's forces,<sup>8</sup> but this was a regular feature of pastoral lifestyles where animals, men and whole families made such crossings together.<sup>9</sup> And an early indication of the significance of the crossing here and elsewhere along these straits is that, while Herodotus has very little say about the eastern Crimea, he does mention 'Cimmerian crossings' there, while showing knowledge too of occasional ice.<sup>10</sup> And he specifically mentions the crossing of the straits by Scythians (Hdt. 4. 28).

The phenomenon deserved the historian's attention. After all, this was more than a mundane crossing. It reached across a principal division between Europe and Asia, so that its practical importance as a busy bottleneck was matched by its ideological importance in the conceptual geography of the ancient world. The settlement at Zhukovka, and to an extent other settlements along this coast, owed much of their identity, and no doubt much of their income to the crossing of the straits. For, as Aristotle remarks of Tenedos, there was a living to be made from ferries (*Politics* 1291b). Accordingly, the settlement at Zhukovka bore the name

<sup>6</sup> On the site, see Vakhtina (2009); (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Vakhtina, Vinogradov and Rogov (1980); cf. Paromov (1998) on routes on Taman.

<sup>8</sup> Priscus, fr. 8 (Blockley). The *monoxyla* dugouts there mentioned were common in the Black Sea: e.g. SEG 59. 834.

<sup>9</sup> Further, Boltrik (1990).

<sup>10</sup> Hdt. 4. 3; cf. 28 (on ice, accurate enough, though often criticised by moderns).



Figure 2 Parthenos dedication from Porthmium. © M. Yu Vakhtina, Porthmium expedition, IIMK

Porthmium, or Porthmia, in antiquity: in Greek the name is redolent of ferry crossing. This was the kind of name applied at various settlements at such crossings around the Greek world,<sup>11</sup> as on Euboea, in the Dodecanese and elsewhere. However, it seems also to have borne the name Parthenium, and to have had a cult of Parthenos. Some detail is required.

In 1990 a dedication to Parthenos was discovered in the course of excavations at Zhukovka. It was inscribed in very clear lettering on the base of a black glaze vessel, probably of Attic production. Only part of the base has survived, so that the dedication is incomplete (Fig. 2). The dedicant's name has mostly been lost, though it seems to have ended in *xi*, presumably Demonax or the like and, unless we suppose an abbreviation, apparently the name of a male.<sup>12</sup> The identification of this text as a dedication to Parthenos, which would in any case be the most probable interpretation, is confirmed by the fact that a settlement named Parthenium is also attested on this stretch of coast. For, like Heracleum, which was also in this vicinity, the place-name Parthenium suggests a cult-centre: while Heracles was at Heracleum, so we may suspect Parthenos was at Parthenium. The inference is confirmed by another Parthenium in the Crimea, a location outside Chersonesus, where there certainly was a cult-centre of the goddess, which

<sup>11</sup> *R-E* (1953) *s.v.* 'Porthmos'.

<sup>12</sup> Tokhtas' yev in Vinogradova and Tokhtas' yev (1998) 26 n. 15; cf. Tokhtas' yev (1993); SEG 48. 1026(i).



Figure 3 Probable location of Parthenos' extra-urban cult-centre near Chersonesus

happens to be mentioned by Strabo.<sup>13</sup> The problematic fact that we are unable to locate any of these places with greater precision does nothing to undermine that key point. Meanwhile, the discovery of the dedication at Porthmium has raised the question of whether the settlement at Zhukovka might better be identified with Parthenium.

In fact, this coast above Panticapaeum (the substantial modern city of Kerch) seems to have been settled quite densely, though there remains a great deal of archaeology to be done here.<sup>14</sup> While particular points of settlement have been recognised, there remains unclarity about how much else may lie here, as well as the delimitations between different communities and the application of Greek toponyms to specific sites. Archaeology will firmly locate places mentioned in the literary record only if we are fortunate enough to find inscriptions that bear on the matter: to date these

<sup>13</sup> Strabo 7. 4. 2: its precise location remains controversial. There it seems to have been the destination of a procession from the city, which might be imagined too in the Bosphorus, despite the considerable distance from Panticapaeum.

<sup>14</sup> Further, Smekalova and Smekalov (2006).



are sadly lacking, while the dedication is hardly decisive. Traditionally, scholars have tended to locate Parthenium a little south along the coast from Porthmium, as if its neighbour, at Yeni Kale, which takes its name from an Ottoman fort there, whose construction tends to confirm the attraction of the site. Of course, the single dedication to Parthenos sheds little light on these matters, but it has sharpened the old question of the relationship between Porthmium and Parthenium, though it must be stressed that we do not know how this pottery fragment came to reach its find spot, while a dedication to Parthenos need not be made only in a place called Parthenium. A closer examination of the literary evidence on these toponyms, however, suggests that Porthmium and Parthenium may well be the same community. For the name Parthenium disappears from the written sources as the name Porthmium appears in them. In that sense, Parthenium became Porthmium, gradually no doubt.<sup>15</sup>

The likelihood that the more generic term Porthmium came to replace Parthenium as the name of the settlement at the crossing becomes all the stronger when we observe that both are treated as the Crimean end of a crossing which reaches the Taman peninsula at the same place, Achilleum, a cult-centre of Achilles.<sup>16</sup> Strabo is very clear about the crossing from Parthenium to Achilleum, describing both as villages:

The mouth of the Maeotis ... ends in a much narrower sea-passage ... Double the distance (i.e. approx. 40 stades) from Myrmecium lies a village, Parthenium, by which entry is narrowest for some 20 stades, and opposite which lies in Asia a village called Achilleum. (Strabo 7.4.5)

It is important to observe Strabo's conceptual geography here. For he perceives the waters at this narrowest portion of the straits as being part of Maeotis, the Sea of Azov. Nor is he unusual in that view in antiquity, a conception which has done much to confuse modern debate. The same phenomenon has been well observed of the northern section of the Thracian Bosphorus too. For, as the ancients conceived of Maeotis reaching into what moderns consider to be the straits of the Crimean Bosphorus, so they viewed the Black Sea as reaching into the straits around Hieron.<sup>17</sup> In both cases we must appreciate the dominant role of perception in human notions of space, boundaries and physical geography more generally.

<sup>15</sup> Braund (2009a). Hdt. 4. 12 cannot be regarded as an exception, since he writes in general terms of crossings, not of a specific place.

<sup>16</sup> Its site has not been established, but is suspected at Il'ich, having succumbed to coastal change.

<sup>17</sup> Further, Moreno (2008).

Still more important, however, is his clear assertion of this sea-crossing from Parthenium to Achilleum. Moreover, in another passage (where the text seems faulty)<sup>18</sup> he describes these waters as a *porthmos* (II. 4. 6). Thereafter, Parthenium seems to disappear: it is last attested in the second century AD (Ptolemy 3. 6. 4).<sup>19</sup> For in late antiquity, the anonymous *Periplus of the Black Sea*, developed from the work of Arrian, says nothing at all of any place called Parthenium and refers instead to the same crossing as running not from Parthenium but from Porthmium across to Achilleum:

From the village of Achilleum – which lies at the end of Asia, and the crossing (*poros*) at the mouth of Lake Maeotis (or of Tanais) and the village which lies opposite at the end of Europe, so-called Porthmium, which itself is also on the crossing (*poros*) at the mouth of Lake Maeotis – is the horizontal sea-crossing of the mouth (20 stades, 2.66 miles). (Anon. *Periplus* 69 = 10γ25, Diller)

Moreover, we should observe that this author refers repeatedly to Porthmium as the ultimate point of Europe towards Asia.<sup>20</sup> That suits the settlement of Zhukovka, hard by Cape Fonar, very well indeed, while it would not suit other points along this coast at all well. Meanwhile, his array of different versions of the name Porthmium tends to encourage the view that this is a place-name in a rather generic sense: ‘The Ferry Crossing’.<sup>21</sup>

Also in late antiquity, Stephanus of Byzantium omits Parthenium and gives Porthmium instead, again with a measure of variation:

Porthmia and Porthmium, a village at the mouth of Lake Maeotis. The ethnic is Porthmieus, like Sounieus, and Porthmites. (Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Porthmia)

Taken together, these various passages give every reason to suspect that the Crimean end of the crossing had been Parthenium, with a cult of Parthenos, presumably the recipient of the fragmentary dedication found in 1990. Evidently, it lost its name Parthenium by late antiquity, when it was known generically as Porthmium, indicating not a cult-centre there

<sup>18</sup> Braund (2009a).

<sup>19</sup> At much the same time, Herodianus prefers Porthmium or Porthmia (*On general prosody* 3. 1, pp. 360 and 389).

<sup>20</sup> Under slightly different names, but with no mention of Parthenium. Arrian had said nothing of these places.

<sup>21</sup> He uses not only Porthmium as in the quoted passage (and 12γ5) and Porthmia (a feminine singular: 16ν5), but also Porthmis (gen. sing., Porthmitidos: 12ν32).



any more but only its important function as a ferry point.<sup>22</sup> If that is right, the cult of Parthenos at Parthenium had lost its significance by the (uncertain) time of the anonymous *Periplus*, if it had not come to a complete end, possibly under the influence of Christianity and the major upheavals in the region that came with the decline of the Bosporan kingdom through the third century AD.

### Parthenos at the Crossing: Deer-Hunters and a Mad Cow

The passage from paganism to Christianity, however, was seldom clear-cut. Of special interest in this regard is a late antique tradition about the crossing of the straits which seems to point again to Parthenos, though that seems never to have been noticed. Procopius gives the clearest version, writing in the sixth century. He describes how some young men out hunting were in pursuit of a deer, specifically a hind, which leapt into the water. The young men followed the hind until they reached the opposite shore in her wake, 'whether they were seized by a love of glory or success, or whether some deity (*daimonion*)<sup>23</sup> compelled them'. At that point the quarry suddenly disappeared. Procopius was evidently oblivious of any connection to Parthenos: he comments, 'in my opinion the only reason for the hind's appearance was to bring evil to the barbarians who lived there'. For the young men returned home and told how the waters could be crossed, which their people immediately did in force (Procopius, *Wars*, 8.5.7–10). Procopius calls the young men 'Cimmerians', but he also makes it very clear that these events were not from the Cimmerian period, before the Scythians: this happened, he stresses, when the Vandals had already moved into Africa and the Visigoths to Spain, indicating a date in the fifth century (*Wars* 8.5.10). The young hunters were Huns, made Cimmerians by the same classicising process that made Goths into Scythians and, rather less absurdly, Lazi into Colchians.<sup>24</sup> Although Procopius' geography might be more explicit in this passage, he locates these events firmly at Maeotis, where, as we have seen, our other sources also located the crossing between the Taman and Crimea (*Wars* 8.5.5).

Procopius is quite explicit in his feeling that a divine power was at work in the story, where much was otherwise hard to explain: the strange

<sup>22</sup> Yermolin and Fedoseyev (2011) object that archaeology shows a plurality of settlements, but in fact archaeology here is limited, while our texts certainly cannot be expected to offer names for all or most of the settlements here, or elsewhere in the region. They clearly do not.

<sup>23</sup> Hdt. 4.103 had called Parthenos a *daimwn*; cf. Strabo, 7.4.2: *daimwn tis*.

<sup>24</sup> Goths as Scythians: *Wars* 8.5.5. On Lazi, Braund (1994).

appearance and disappearance of the hind, and the strange decision of the hunters to persist in their pursuit even into the water. Since the Crimean Goths were to suffer a Hunnic invasion because of these events, he reasonably infers that the deity at work was set on visiting evil upon the Goths of the Crimea. Meanwhile, the notion of young male hunters might suit a range of deities, but the presence of the hind points firmly towards an Artemis-like goddess, if not Artemis herself.<sup>25</sup> In the Crimea, deer-hunting was especially associated with Parthenos, as her iconography there shows.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, we have already seen Parthenos at the Crimean side of the crossing centuries before. While her cult there may have been of reduced significance in late antiquity, her presence lingered. For, as we shall see, she was goddess not only at the crossing but across the whole Crimea, so that hers was not only a local presence but also a regional one. If we may follow Procopius' reasoning, the story suggests that the Crimean Goths had won Parthenos' displeasure.

Our earliest version of the tale is provided by Sozomen, who wrote in the previous century. He relates it in much the same way as Procopius, but without explicit reflection on supernatural involvement or much other detail. However, his account is of great interest because he presents this tale of the hunters and the hind (whose female gender is again specified) as an alternative tradition to a similar story, which looks like an emended version of the mythical crossing of Io long before. For according to this, the first story he gives, it was not a hind that led the way across, but a bovine which was driven by a gadfly. The creature was not pursued by hunters but by a herdsman, who may be compared to Io's Argos, the many-eyed herdsman slain by Hermes. Remarkably, the myth of Io seems to have been adapted into a tale to explain how the Huns found their way across to the Crimea.<sup>27</sup>

Heracles too may be involved, as he is so often to the north of the Black Sea.<sup>28</sup> For Heracles is said to have crossed from Italy to Sicily by following cattle of Geryon who had crossed that way (Paus. 3. 15. 6), while he was said in the north Black Sea region to have brought those same cattle to Scythia (Hdt. 4. 8–10) and we know his cult-centre on the left side of the Bosphorus strait, at Heracleum. Crossings were important ideologically as well as for practical purposes, so that they often attracted mythical

<sup>25</sup> Her association with young men is well established elsewhere, for example at Elis, but also at Halae and Sparta, where young men are at issue and rites of passage are close at hand, as discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>26</sup> Rusyayeva and Rusyayeva (1999); cf. Guldager Bilde (2003); (2009).

<sup>27</sup> McNerney (2010), esp. 132–3 offers a larger context for Io: further, ch. 4.

<sup>28</sup> As with Aphrodite, ch. 5.

tales.<sup>29</sup> While it is not surprising that cattle-myths are linked to a place called Bosphorus, it remains to understand in any detail how those myths emerged into the version that we have here in late antiquity. Similarly, we can do no more than observe the potential association between these bovine evocations and the Taurians, or 'Bulls' of the Crimea (alias Taurike, or 'Bull-land'), as strikingly instanced in the late antique story that Osiris gave the land its name by ploughing with bulls there.<sup>30</sup>

As to the hunters and the hind, Sozomen offers this as a second version of what happened, without giving any strong sense of his own preference, if he had one. Clearly, he found this second version in his sources too, perhaps oral as well as written: it is what 'others say', as he puts it (6. 37. 4). There is nothing to be gained by speculating on the identity of these 'others', but we can only wonder whether the story of the deer-hunters had roots earlier than the Crimean Goths, as Parthenos certainly did.<sup>31</sup> In view of the adaptation of Io's myth to the new circumstances of the fifth century, there is every possibility that the story of hunters and hind might also be the reapplication of an older tradition in much the same way. Certainly, that would further explain how Parthenos could survive so late at this crossing, even after her cult had lost its significance there. It would also help to explain the limited interest of the Bosphorans in Io. It may be that they preferred to imagine a real bovine, as in the adapted version given by Sozomen, but there seems more to be said for the view that it was the tale of hunters and hind that was in fact the local tradition.<sup>32</sup> Once we observe the presence of Parthenos in the story (or perhaps Artemis, as Greeks outside the region might have it) and the significance of Parthenium in such crossings centuries before, it becomes difficult to avoid the inference that we have here a myth of the local landscape. Indeed, it was at landfall in the Crimea that the hind had suddenly disappeared. Since that place was also presumably Parthenium, the Crimean end of the crossing, it is likely that the story of a crossing hind was key to her cult there, long before Huns and Goths came into the region. After all, myths of guiding animals are common enough in contexts of discovery, revelation and foundation, whether in the classical world or elsewhere in human activity.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Crossing was of particular significance for Heracles too, e.g. with Nessus the centaur.

<sup>30</sup> Further, pp. 154–55.

<sup>31</sup> As for later authors, Agathias 5. 11 adds nothing; Jordanes, *Getica* 34, sees supernatural forces at work.

<sup>32</sup> Further Shaub (2007) on that line of thought, albeit overlooking Parthenos.

<sup>33</sup> Krappe (1942) collects many examples.

In this case, Io's story constitutes an etymology, whereas the tale of the hind does not, though it may amount to an aetiology for the cult at Parthenium, as we have seen. Accordingly, these stories have their function, centred upon the remarkable crossing-place which was not only between Taman and Crimea, but also between continents.

### Chryse near Parthenium

When we consider the cult of Parthenos at the straits, we should also reflect on the fact that a red-figure pelike with a related design was chosen to be deposited in the great kurgan at nearby Baksy.<sup>34</sup> This vessel of the late fifth century shows Heracles sacrificing to the goddess Chryse. We have noticed elsewhere how this and the large krater from Baksy combine with the cult-centre at Heracleum to demonstrate the importance of Heracles in this corner of the Crimea and to suggest the possibility that the man buried at Baksy early in the fourth century might follow Heracles into immortality.<sup>35</sup> Parthenos also has a bearing. For the goddess Chryse was located on Lemnos, sometimes on a small island close by which later disappeared.<sup>36</sup> She is best known in association with the snake that bit Philoctetes' foot. Even that evokes Scythia to the extent that Philoctetes had taken his famous bow from Heracles, whose funeral-pyre he had assisted: Heracles in turn had taken this bow from Teutarus the Scythian, at least in some traditions.<sup>37</sup> Heracles and Philoctetes had together visited the goddess, when Heracles had sacrificed to her.<sup>38</sup> More important, however, is the connection between Chryse and the Taurians themselves. Our clearest statement of that comes from Hyginus of the Augustan period.<sup>39</sup> He writes that, on escaping the Crimea, Orestes and his party came to the island of Zminthe, which has usually been identified with the island of Chryse.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Taurian King Thoas arrived there and was about to receive the escapees from the local priest of Apollo, Chryses, when it was revealed that this priest was related to them through Agamemnon, who was his father too (*Fab.* 120–1). The evocation of gold in the names of the goddess and her priest also offers a link to Orestes, whose hair was golden,

<sup>34</sup> ARV<sup>2</sup> 1038.2 *ter*, Addenda<sup>2</sup> 319.

<sup>35</sup> Braund (2009b). On the Baksy krater, see esp. Shefton (1982); (1992). On Baksy as a whole, see Vinogradov (2011).

<sup>36</sup> Soph. fr. 384; Paus. 8. 33. 4; cf. Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Chryse; Eustath. *Comm. on Dionys. Per.* 517 (Thasos).

<sup>37</sup> Braund (2010c).

<sup>38</sup> For key ancient texts, see Hooker (1950) and fig. 4, showing the Baksy pelike.

<sup>39</sup> *Fab.* 120–1; cf. Corbett and Strong (1961). On Hyginus' sources, see Cameron (2004).

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Marshall (2009) 151.

as was evidently stressed in the cult which he was said to have founded at Cappadocian Comana.<sup>41</sup> Orestes seems to have gained his hair colour from Agamemnon and to have shared it with the well-named Electra and no doubt Chrysothemis too, so that the priest Chryses should also be imagined as having fair hair from the same source.<sup>42</sup> There is a thread of gold running through Orestes' story, from the golden lamb of Atreus onwards to the famous Golden Bough which he was said to have created in Italy.<sup>43</sup> And that too was appropriate enough not only to his mission among light-haired Scythians,<sup>44</sup> but to the whole atmosphere of murder that had enveloped the house of Atreus (on which more below). The 'raw-minded' goddess Chryse,<sup>45</sup> as also the golden lamb and, elsewhere in mythology, the Golden Fleece, showed how gold was at least dangerous and bloodstained.

No doubt we would find our way more comfortably through all this if we had Euripides' play on the subject – *Chryse* – which evidently had much in common with his *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. Part of the problem with this nexus of myths is the amalgamation of Taurian Thoas with the Thoas who was father of Hypsipyle on Lemnos,<sup>46</sup> and so central to the tradition of Lemnian women that was so important in Argonautic myth. Of course, in both mythical traditions we find a clear recognition of the importance of Lemnos for those sailing towards the Hellespont and Black Sea beyond.

In principle, the deposition at Crimean Baksy of the pelike showing the goddess Chryse might be random chance, but we can only be impressed by the remarkable appropriateness of its theme, which associated Heracles and Parthenos in the very locale where those two deities enjoyed special prominence, at nearby Heracleum and Parthenium. Moreover, Heracles' association with Parthenos at Baksy, as suggested by this vase, may remind us too of the myth told across the straits at Apaturon, where Heracles supported Aphrodite.<sup>47</sup> Of course, Chryse is not Parthenos (although she is doubtless a *parthenos*), but she is so similar that she has been compared with Artemis Tauropolos.<sup>48</sup> Her violent reputation certainly suits Aegean conceptions of the Taurian deity. For these reasons, the pelike at Baksy

<sup>41</sup> *Wars* 8. 17. 19. On Comana(s), see [Chapter 2](#).

<sup>42</sup> On the theme in Athenian tragedy, see [Torrance \(2011\)](#); [\(2013\)](#).

<sup>43</sup> [Hall \(2012\)](#) ch. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Sappho fr. 167 Bergk (= 210 L-P), *ap.* Photius, *Lexicon s.v.* thapsos: 'Scythian wood' as blond dye, a *cotinus*.

<sup>45</sup> Soph. *Phil.* 194 with [Hughes \(1991\)](#) 121 on rawness and human sacrifice.

<sup>46</sup> The topic of another Athenian tragedy, by Sophocles, as also his *Lemnian Women*; cf. his *Chryses*. Further, [Cropp \(2003\)](#); [Kyriakou \(2006\)](#).

<sup>47</sup> See [Chapter 5](#).

<sup>48</sup> [Segal \(1999\)](#) 309; cf. Soph. *Phil.* 194 with [Segal \(2009\)](#) III.

offers some rare support for those who argue that the interpenetration of Taurian and Lemnian Thoas occurred well before the Roman period when we see it most clearly in Hyginus' compendium of myths. Meanwhile, the shadow of Achilles lies over much of this, most clearly through the role of his son, Neoptolemus, in bringing Philoctetes at last to Troy

### Talking to Taurians: Parthenos, Iphigenia and Achilles

At first sight, there may seem no role for Achilles at the crossing. However, he is there. For both Strabo and the anonymous *Periplus* locate Achilleum at the Asiatic end of the crossing from Parthenium-Porthmium. Achilles was already 'lord of Scythia' for Alcaeus early in archaic times.<sup>49</sup> He acquired a new title in the Roman period, as *Pontarkhes*, 'Lord of the Sea/Pontos'.<sup>50</sup> However, his association with sea travel is strong enough long before this title is attested. It is enough to reflect upon his cult on the island of Leuke, with which he was associated already, again, early in the archaic period as we know from the *Aithiopsis*, which has his body transported there by Thetis. His marine significance no doubt owed much to his mother. Accordingly, the deified Achilles was a suitable deity for the end of such a crossing. However, we should also consider the relationship between the two ends of the crossing, Achilles and Parthenos with their respective cults. For their connection illustrates further the nature of Parthenos in the Bosporan kingdom.

First, the Taurians themselves, who are at once familiar, strange and dangerous in all our texts from antiquity. Ancient authors tend to locate them in the mountains that stretch along most of the southern coast of the Crimea, almost as far as Theodosia. They figure regularly in the royal titles of the Bosporan kings among the peoples who are their subjects. However, those royal titles apart, we have very little information about their relations with the Bosporan state, beyond the conflict that recurs well into the Roman period.<sup>51</sup> In consequence much interest has been attracted by the tombstone of Tykhon the Taurian, found on so-called Mt. Mithridates, the extensive acropolis of Panticapaeum. It is dated to the fifth century B.C. In principle, the burial of a Taurian there might speak volumes about the relationship between Taurians and the Bosporan kings, and at a quite early date. Moreover, the announcement of his ethnicity on the stone might

<sup>49</sup> Alcaeus fr. 354. Cf. Pinney (1983).

<sup>50</sup> Further, Hupe (2006). Cf. Saprykin (2017) on sailors' dedications in the region.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Bowersock and Jones (2006).

also be suggestive about Bosporan–Taurian interaction. Unfortunately, however, his Taurian ethnicity is the product of the modern imagination. The friable stone now shows no sign of it. More important, however, the considerable discussions of epigraphists at the time of its discovery over a century ago show that none of them actually saw his ethnicity on the stone either. Rather the Taurian identity of Tykhon is an old hypothesis among epigraphers which has subsequently become a factoid.<sup>52</sup> Regrettably, there is no reason to make him a Taurian or to suppose that his epitaph ever mentioned Taurians at all.

Ancient accounts of Taurians tend to focus sharply on their bloody tendencies. No doubt Euripides' play contributed to that image, but there was much else too. Around 100 BC Ps.-Scymnus writes that 'the Taurians are many in their mobs', in his extraordinary poem on the Black Sea for a King Nicomedes of Bithynia (Ps.-Scymnus 821). In view of Bithynian involvement with the Taurians, primarily through the foundation of Chersonesus from Heraclea Pontica, that perspective must be treated with particular attention. It suggests the political disorder usually imagined among the most barbarous.<sup>53</sup> For lack of political control betokened chaos and the rejection of laws of every kind: these Taurians are rather worse than the orderly people put on stage by Euripides. By 100 BC, the Taurians already had a long record of piratical violence, which would persist into the Roman period, when the empire established a fort in the uplands at Charax (Ay-Todor) to assert a measure of control there.<sup>54</sup> Evidently neither the city of Chersonesus nor the Bosporan kingdom had been able to do that for themselves, at least not to an extent deemed satisfactory at Rome. Tacitus happens to mention that a Roman cohort en route from Claudius' Bosporan War was shipwrecked and massacred on the Taurian coast (*Ann.* 12. 17). Among their earlier depredations was apparently the kidnap and ransom of two sacred envoys from Delphi who were touring the Black Sea to announce the forthcoming Pythian Games early in the second century BC. Evidently, the Taurians had scant respect for the Greek religious laws that should have protected the men. Their decision to ransom the men rather than butcher them was presumably driven more by thoughts of profit than by any religious anxiety. That this was the work of Taurians is indicated by the fact that it was the city of Chersonesus that paid the

<sup>52</sup> CIRB 114, where his Taurian ethnicity was never seen on the stone, and is unlikely: see Braund (2004).

<sup>53</sup> As with the Drillae and Sanni of the southeastern Black Sea, e.g. Xen. *Anab.* 5. 2; Arrian *Periplus* 11.

<sup>54</sup> On Ai-Todor, e.g. Sarnowski (2006). On Chatyr-Dagh: Myts' et al. (2006).

ransom, for which the city won abundant honours from the Delphians in 192 BC (Syll.<sup>3</sup> 604).

Herodotus offers enlightenment on all these matters, including our earliest extant account of the wicked ways of the Taurians. Having given a short disquisition on the location of the Taurians,<sup>55</sup> where he insists on the distinction between them and the Scythians, Herodotus writes:

Of these, the Taurians have the following customs. They sacrifice to Parthenos both the shipwrecked and those of the Greeks whom they capture by foray at sea, in the following manner. After preliminaries they strike them on the head with a club and push them off the crag (for the sanctuary is located on a crag), but they impale the head on a pole. However, other authorities, while agreeing about the head, say that the body is not pushed off the crag, but buried in the ground.

And as for this deity to whom they sacrifice, the Taurians themselves say that she is Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon. As for enemy males whom they defeat, they do the following. Each man cuts off the head and takes it home. Then after impaling it on a large length of wood, he sets it high above his house, indeed higher than the chimney. And they say that these watch over the whole house and guard it. They live from brigandage and warfare. (Hdt. 4. 103)<sup>56</sup>

This account is not only our earliest on Taurian behaviour, but also by far our fullest. However, he makes it very clear that much had already been said, no doubt orally as well as in written form. He will have heard a lot about Taurians in his journey up the west coast of the Black Sea, especially at Olbia, whence derives most of his information on the region.<sup>57</sup> Of earlier texts we have only glimpses, but these flesh out a little Herodotus' allusions. For example, Pausanias says, rather enigmatically, that in the *Catalogue of Women* Artemis transformed Iphigenia into Hekate, and so agrees with Herodotus (Paus. 1. 43.1). Since Herodotus has Iphigenia among the Taurians (at least, as Taurians claimed), while the *Cypria* had Artemis whisk Iphigenia to the Taurians,<sup>58</sup> the *Catalogue* may also have mentioned her Taurian role after she escaped sacrifice at Aulis.<sup>59</sup> The receipt of ghastly sacrifices suits Hekate, so that the *Catalogue* probably agreed with Herodotus in the sense that it had Iphigenia-Hekate as the deity to

<sup>55</sup> Its geography is somewhat obscure, as commentators note: see Hind (1987).

<sup>56</sup> See Corcella's valuable commentary ad loc.

<sup>57</sup> That seems agreed even among those sceptical about his travels: West (2007) with the other essays in that volume.

<sup>58</sup> Sceptics like to stress that we rely on Proclus' summary, though there is no reason at all to suppose him inaccurate on the matter: in general, Burgess (1996) with bibliography; Scafoglio (2014–15).

<sup>59</sup> The lack of its full text leaves numerous questions: see Cropp (2000) 43–4.



whom the Taurians made their human sacrifices. Meanwhile, the plurality of different stories on these themes is amply illustrated later by Diodorus Siculus' bizarre account of a Hekate who was the bloodthirsty daughter of an early Taurian king named Perses, who went on to bear Circe and Medea to her uncle Aeetes, king of Colchis. It was she that established the bloody Taurian rites (Diod. 4. 44). The fundamental problem is that we have lost so much that was written in antiquity. Accordingly, the interpretation of another Hekate, in the Bosporan kingdom, is elusive: a dedication was made in the third century BC at Panticapaeum, to 'Hekate, mistress of Sparta' (CIRB 33). Presumably this is in some sense Artemis Orthia, whose link to Parthenos was well known, as we shall see, but it remains to explain the dedicant's conception of her as Hekate.<sup>60</sup> However, since Iphigenia-Hekate was also identifiable as Parthenos, and the Taurian deity was in some sense Artemis Orthia at Sparta, we should probably interpret this Bosporan dedication as directed at Orthia, appropriately 'mistress of Sparta', while the dedicant seems to acknowledge the identification too of Parthenos with Hekate.

As for the Taurians' own conceptions of their deity, Herodotus' brief summary is the only statement we have. Taurian savagery is obvious enough in his account, but we should also recall the various ghastly acts which Herodotus reports of the Scythians too, who engage in human sacrifice (to their version of Ares,<sup>61</sup> in place of Parthenos) and who also have a strong tendency to mutilation, not least in the course of their sacrifices and, also like the Taurians, in their treatment of enemies. In those respects, there are distinctions in detail to be made between the two peoples, but their behaviour is broadly similar. Moreover, Scythians too were committed to war, even if we hear also of their broader economic concerns. The key difference between Taurians and their Scythian neighbours, apart from the latter's physical and perhaps ideological distance from the sea as pastoralists, is the Taurians' brigandage. As far as Herodotus tells us, that was not the way of Scythians, though warfare certainly was. As for political organisation among Taurians, Herodotus says nothing and we are in no position to make inferences from his silence.

However, for all its grimness, Herodotus' account of Taurians is not completely negative. It is occasioned in the *Histories* by Taurian participation in a council of war called by the Scythians in the face of Darius' invasion, with its foreshadowing of later Greek responses to later Persian

<sup>60</sup> In fact, much about Orthia remains obscure to us: further Waugh (2009).

<sup>61</sup> Alekseyev (1980).

invasions. Such talks suggest that Taurians can associate peaceably and even debate in some fashion, though we may note that the collection of peoples summoned by the Scythians includes some other worrying peoples, notably the cannibal Androphagi and the werewolf Neuri. At the same time, Herodotus clearly indicates access to the Taurians' own conception of their deity, though he makes no claim to any direct contact with them, let alone a visit. However, the fact that he thought he knew what Taurians say about their deity again suggests that he did not consider them wholly intractable. After all, their killings and mutilations are not random acts in his report. These appear as the result of piety, however unpleasant, and there is an evident rationale to their decapitation of their male enemies too. Females and children, it seems, were to be treated differently: slavery or sale may be suspected. Further, he thought them sufficiently aware of Greek culture to be able to associate their Parthenos with Iphigenia. No doubt he, together with the other writers to whom he alludes, was well aware of the archaic traditions that we have glimpsed concerning Iphigenia's transportation to the Taurians and the events that followed. A large clue to that is the existence of these different accounts of sacrifice among the Taurians. The focus on sacrifice surely arose especially from the myth, whereby Iphigenia escapes sacrifice, oversees sacrifice and then forestalls the sacrifice of her brother and his companion. Human sacrifice among the Taurians attracted debate among Greeks not simply as a matter of ethnographic detail, but as the core feature of a principal set of myths. Moreover, those myths were enacted in ritual around the Greek world, as we shall see. In Attica, notably, the rites of Artemis at Halae and Brauron were probably in place well before the Persian Wars: there is no good reason to suppose that their cult aetiologies at that stage were substantially different from those attested by Euripides, wherein Taurian sacrifice is key to ritual at Halae. Unfortunately, the excavations at Halae can only be viewed through a prism of uncertainties, because they were not published properly or at all. Now, thanks to recent heroic efforts, we at last have some broad sense of what was found and a mass of data, even if there abides a powerful and outrageous sense too of our inevitable ignorance through past neglect. Here it suffices to state that Halae seems to have been a significant ritual centre from the first half of the second millennium BC into the late Roman period.<sup>62</sup>

Of course, it is possible simply to reject *tout court* Herodotus' statement that the Taurians themselves identified Parthenos with Iphigenia, especially as we are so wholly unclear about where he had gained that information.

<sup>62</sup> On Halae, see esp. Kalogeropoulos (2013) and the next chapter.

However, we have seen that, for all their ghastly ways, the Taurians were not completely intractable: they were not random killers, so that some Greeks might move among them. The city of Chersonesus is especially interesting in that regard. We now know, thanks to archaeology, that the city was settled, however inchoately, before the Persian Wars, probably c. 525–500 BC, or perhaps (as some would prefer) a few decades later.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, there was never anything in the literary tradition to support the later date that was long canonical, which had the city founded around 422 BC.<sup>64</sup> Clearly the developing city there must have had dealings with the local Taurians, whose territory seems to have reached well north of the city as far up the coast as Cercinitis in Herodotus' view (Hdt. 4. 99). While much of that relationship may have been hostile, we should also remember that such settlements engaged also in more positive relationships with local populations. The early Greek settlers were unlikely to prosper without a measure of local support or acquiescence. The later ransoming of the Delphian envoys, for example, indicates more than simple enmity between the city and its neighbours even centuries after its beginnings. Archaeology across the area seems to confirm that Greeks and natives were living together or in close proximity from the later sixth century BC onwards.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, we may be sure enough that the city had a keen interest in any myth that brought its locale within the network of Greek tradition: Orestes, in particular, is likely to have been of much interest to this Dorian community. Given the tendencies to local mythography and historiography that are clear already in the fifth century at Heraclea Pontica and later at Chersonesus, its colony, the force of that interest seems beyond any question. And the myth of Iphigenia among Taurians offered an invaluable common ground on which relationships between the city and its neighbours could be constructed. Accordingly, while Herodotus gathered most of his information at Olbia, he may also have included Chersonitan accounts of Orestes and Iphigenia among the earlier sources to which he alludes. However, despite these probabilities, there is a deafening silence about Iphigenia in extant sources on the city, including a substantial epigraphic record. There, repeatedly, Parthenos is simply Parthenos. As for the Taurians, a strong reason to give credence to Herodotus' statement

<sup>63</sup> Nikolayenko (2006) with bibliography. Arguments from supposed silence encourage the later dating (notably, Stoyanov (2007)), but see Braund (2005e); (2007a). Pottery of 500–450 BC continues to be found: Ushakov, Lesnaya and Tyurin (2013).

<sup>64</sup> Extraordinarily, that date was simply an unwarranted inference from Pseudo-Scymnus' statement (line 828) that Delians took part in the foundation.

<sup>65</sup> Nikolayenko (2006).

that they identified their Parthenos with Iphigenia must be that the identification is so unusual, unparalleled among Greeks. For Greeks identified Parthenos with Artemis, with Iphigenia as her priestess, as in Euripides' play and elsewhere.

### Parthenos between Taurians and Greeks

At this point we must acknowledge a scholarly debate which has dominated much of the modern literature, despite its general futility. A fresh consideration may even render it useful. For there has been much dispute about whether Parthenos should be understood as a Taurian (or more broadly, non-Greek) deity or, alternatively, as a Greek deity. As to the former pole, there is substantial archaeological evidence for cult among the Taurians, but none of it shows significant iconography or the name Parthenos, not least because there are no inscriptions and the name – at least as we have it – seems clearly Greek. Nor is it at all clear even that this cult activity concerned a dominant female deity.<sup>66</sup> Of special interest in this regard are the excavations of recent decades at Gurzuf Sedlo, where a substantial cult-site has been found on a high pass in the Taurian mountains. The site, with its notable lack of masonry, was in use well into Roman imperial times from beginnings that evidently pre-date the arrival of Greek settlers in the Crimea. Parthenos may well have had a role here, together with other deities, but the evidence could be stronger. Images of Artemis feature enough among deposits, but there is no particular reason to interpret them as Parthenos, while there are images too of other deities, male and female, including Isis, as we shall see. The early activity there that we may reasonably deem 'Taurian' at Gurzuf demonstrates substantial sacrifice of animals, but not of humans. If Taurians had a form of Parthenos before Greeks came, then she may well have received cult at Gurzuf Sedlo, as indeed she may well have done in the classical period. However, that possibility – our strongest candidate for Taurian Parthenos before the Greeks – hardly adds much life to the tired debate about the ethnic roots of the deity, despite the great interest of the site, where Artemis seems to feature among the variety of statuettes deposited.<sup>67</sup>

While evidence for her Taurian roots is thin, at best, her Greek origins are better attested, albeit with a measure of ambivalence. For, although a

<sup>66</sup> Meshcheryakov (1979) collects much of this work. Cf. Rusyayeva and Rusyayeva (1999).

<sup>67</sup> The muddled debate: e.g. Popova (2011). On this site, see Novichenkova (1996); (2008); (2015) (in detail). She observes a hint of Parthenos in a nearby toponym, albeit much later.

deity named simply Parthenos was no part of any standard Greek pantheon, maiden goddesses were familiar among Greeks and the name might be an epithet for more familiar goddesses, such as Athena Parthenos at Athens. In that vein, we may observe that Kore, who might seem to resemble Crimean Parthenos in some respects, seems never to have been associated or even compared with her in antiquity: her relationship with Hades no doubt made that difficult in any event. Meanwhile, it is not hard to find other deities known simply as Parthenos as localised cults around the Greek world, as we shall see in the [next chapter](#). All in all, therefore, the fact that a Parthenos was so important in the new Greek city of Chersonesus encourages support for the notion that she had somehow come from the local Taurians, whether that was a historical reality (as Herodotus' Taurian chapters tend to suggest)<sup>68</sup> or whether that notion was more a feature of the self-generated traditions of the city itself. In either case, Parthenos would again underscore the strong probability that relationships between the city and its local neighbours were about much more than hostility.

At the same time, however, we must reckon with the tradition that Delians participated in the foundation, for that would seem to bring Artemis close to these issues.<sup>69</sup> At least as important, however, is the hint of Parthenos in the dominant mother-city, Heraclea Pontica. For the River Parthenius lay to the east of Heraclea, the modern river Bartın. It featured prominently not only in the topography of its broad region, but also in the mythology of its own foundation. The fact that the foundation myths of Heraclea are complex and even confused does not affect that fact. The river was said to have taken its name from Artemis. Moreover, by its banks a nymph bore the grandson of the civic hero of Heraclea (variously Agamestor or Idmon) to his son, Clitus.<sup>70</sup> This tradition may encourage the suspicion that the Greeks who settled Chersonesus from Heraclea brought notions of Parthenos with them.

And there is further reason to suspect as much. Rarely considered in this context is the importance of Iphigenia to the Megarian and indeed Boeotian traditions at Heraclea Pontica.<sup>71</sup> For that city was famously a

<sup>68</sup> See below, p. 59.

<sup>69</sup> Tokhtas'yev (2007) argues for evidence of Delians in the city's epigraphy, while also giving a much-needed post-480 date to ostracism there.

<sup>70</sup> Robert (1980) 165–76 on the knotty evidence. Cf. Kacharava and Kvirkvelia (1991) 217; Asheri (1972). On cults of the souther Euxine, see Saprykin (2009).

<sup>71</sup> See, exceptionally, Hollinshead (1985) noting also the Parthenon attested at Brauron in the third century B.C., but probably established earlier: SEG 37. 89.

joint foundation of Megarians and Boeotians: it has seldom been noticed that Iphigenia and Artemis constitute a linkage between them that may help to explain how this joint enterprise played out, apparently through the initiative of the Delphic oracle.<sup>72</sup> The Megarians claimed a significant role in the events surrounding the departure of the Greeks to Troy from Boeotian Aulis. For they held that Calchas, whose explanatory prophesies were key to the sacrifice of Iphigenia and much else,<sup>73</sup> had been brought from Megara to Aulis by Agamemnon himself, who had come to Megara for that very purpose. On that visit too, said the Megarians, he had built a temple of Artemis there (Paus. 1. 43. 1). That was before the sacrifice of Iphigenia, who, again according to Megarian tradition, had died and received cult in Megara (Paus. 1. 43. 1). Pausanias also reports a cult of a Megarian princess, Iphinoe, who received libations and hair-locks at her tomb from girls planning to marry (Paus. 1. 43. 4). The connection between Iphinoe and Iphigenia is uncertain, but we should note that each of them died a *parthenos* (Paus. 1. 43. 4). Of course, Pausanias was writing many centuries after the foundations of Heraclea Pontica and Chersonesus, so that we must retain a measure of caution about how much of this was in place in archaic times. However, these Megarian claims seem nonetheless to suggest that Iphigenia and the matter of her sacrifice at Boeotian Aulis had particular significance at Megara. Meanwhile, there was a temple of Artemis at Aulis, where a cult of Iphigenia has not unnaturally been suspected.<sup>74</sup>

Of course, there is no suggestion in antiquity that Chersonesus was founded directly from Megara or Boeotia, but the persistent awareness of Megarian roots at Chersonesus seems confirmed by Pliny's assertion that the city had previously borne the name *Megarice* (*NH* 4. 85: 'Megarian (*polis*)'). At the same time, it is important to observe the absence of Iphigenia (at least by that name) at Heraclea and, as far as we know, also the other Megarian colonies of the region. Clearly, the Megarian concern with her was strongly localised in Megara, for it was there that she died, as they claimed (Paus. 1. 43. 1). In a sense, therefore, her cult was poorly suited for travel to distant lands of the Black Sea. And yet, while cults of Artemis were widespread, the relevance of Iphigenia to Megarians, Boeotians and Taurians looks like rather more than coincidence. It seems that those who settled Chersonesus in the land of the Taurians had thought not

<sup>72</sup> On that initiative, see Malkin (1987) esp. 73–7.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 1. 106–8 with Kurke (2013) III n. 30.

<sup>74</sup> Further, Hollinshead (1985) sceptically.

only to archaic traditions about Iphigenia's activities there, but also about the Megarian and Boeotian heritage of Heraclea Pontica, which made Iphigenia their own *parthenos*. All these considerations tend to highlight the inadequacy of simple questions about whether Parthenos was Greek or Taurian, for she was evidently both. The Taurians' perspective is hard to assess, but Herodotus makes it plain enough that the Taurians had a principal deity named Parthenos, whom they could identify with Iphigenia. There is no reason to doubt him. Instead we should take the Taurians' awareness of Iphigenia as another indication of their developing relationship with the Greeks of Chersonesus and no doubt also the Bosphoran kingdom. Meanwhile, from the city's perspective, the story is more complex, but we have seen how Greeks might bring Iphigenia and Parthenos with them to Chersonesus.

Subsequently, as a principal deity and protectress of the community (not least against non-Greek threats), Parthenos was very much Greek and indeed Chersonitan.<sup>75</sup> We do not know for sure how her origins were imagined in the city, but this seems to be a narrative of appropriation, whereby the Chersonitans supposed the goddess to have welcomed the Greek settlement into her realm among the Taurians. Such tales are common enough, as for example with the goddess Libya and Cyrene, where the local deity of the place, Libya, accepted the Greek foundation in much the same way.<sup>76</sup> What is less clear is how that narrative of acceptance by the local goddess mapped onto the settlers' awareness of such deities in their own traditions, whether from Iphigenia and Artemis at Megara and Boeotia, or from the Parthenius River and its nymph at Heraclea, or, if we take seriously the tradition of a Delian role at Chersonesus, from the many Delian traditions surrounding Artemis and her associates. The fact that the cult of Parthenos that was key in Chersonesus evidently had no such role elsewhere is enough to confirm the suspicion that its origins lay in the particular brew of Greek traditions brought by Greeks into a local environment where a warlike maiden deity was already important, though only Greeks can have been responsible for her naming as Parthenos ('Maiden'). If that is right, we have a further glimpse of religious interaction within the larger context of cultural osmosis that was archaic Greek colonisation, in the Crimea as elsewhere. Moreover, we may appreciate the considerable role that the cult of Parthenos will have had in holding together and building a community at Chersonesus from people who had

<sup>75</sup> SEG 54. 690 might place her even in Nikonion.

<sup>76</sup> Further, Braund (2007a).

such a range of traditions. For Parthenos was a deity in which they could all share: Heracleotes, Delians and others, including the Taurians, from whom the early settlement probably took many of its women.

### **Taurian Identity and the Extent of the Kizil Koba Culture**

Meanwhile, we must also consider the strength and location of the Taurians. Their name too is a Greek one, and there must be a question about how it related to local perceptions and identities in the region, including local names. It is worth recalling that the well-known Scythians were in fact known to themselves primarily under a very different name, Skolotoi: it seems to have been the Greeks who called them Scythians (Hdt. 4. 6). There is also a certain confusion about their location, though they are usually and rightly placed in part among the mountains of the southern Crimea. In fact, Herodotus is quite explicit. He places the Taurians south of Cercinitis on the western side of the Crimea, but envisages them also stretching across the Crimea to its eastern side:

At once from the Ister begins this original land of Scythia, and it lies towards the midday and the South Wind, extending as far as the city called Cercinitis. After this the part which lies on the coast of the same sea still, a country which is mountainous and runs out in the direction of the Pontus, is occupied by the Taurian people (*ethnos*), as far as the peninsula which is called the 'Rugged Chersonese'; and this extends to the sea which lies towards the East Wind: for two sides of the Scythian boundaries lie along by the sea, one by the sea on the South, and the other by that on the East, just as it is with Attica: and in truth the Taurians occupy a part of Scythia which has much resemblance to Attica; it is as if in Attica another people and not the Athenians occupied the hill region of Sounion, supposing it to project more at the point into the sea, that region namely which is cut off by a line from Thorikos to Anaphlystos. Such I say, if we may be allowed to compare small things such as this with great, is the form of the Taurian land. For him however who has not sailed along this part of the coast of Attica I will make it clear by another comparison: it is as if in Iapygia another people and not the Iapygians had cut off for themselves and were holding that extremity of the land which is bounded by a line beginning at the harbour of Brentesion and running to Taras. And in mentioning these two similar cases I am suggesting many other things also to which the Taurian land has resemblance.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Hdt. 4. 99 (tr. Macaulay, with minor adaptations); cf. 4. 55.



On the west coast of the Crimea, Scythian land becomes Taurian at Cercinitis (modern Yevpatoria), where a Greek settlement was founded by c. 500 B.C.<sup>78</sup> It must be understood that Cercinitis lies well north of the mountains for which the Taurians are so renowned. Meanwhile, Herodotus' mention of a peninsula to the east has caused confusion with Chersonesus (though this is on the south and west), but he clearly means the so-called Kerch peninsula, that is the Crimean side of the Bosporan kingdom.<sup>79</sup> Less clear in Herodotus' account, however, is the extent to which Taurians spread into that eastern peninsula.<sup>80</sup> He is at pains to stress that the Taurians do not occupy all the Crimea, only its southern portion. In that area there are impressive mountains which dominate the landscape, especially along the southern shore. These form a remarkable contrast with the steppe of the northern Crimea and the further steppe-country to the north beyond the isthmus of the Crimea at modern Perekop. However, there is also a middle ground, an agricultural belt above the northern foothills of the mountains. Herodotus' mention of Cercinitis places much of that belt too in Taurian territory.

Archaeology tends to confirm his statements, while confounding many a modern vision of Taurians limited to mountain fastnesses. For we find a material culture, notably in pottery but also in burial practice, that is not confined to the mountains, and which reaches across the Crimea from well north of Cercinitis to the west into the Bosporan civic territory on the east, from earliest archaic times deep into the Hellenistic period. This is a material culture (traditionally termed the 'Kizil Koba culture') which was strong not only in the southern extremity of the Crimea, but also in the good agricultural land that stretches across the Crimea close to the north of the foothills of the mountain range.<sup>81</sup>

The Kizil Koba culture is attested in the Kerch peninsula during the process which saw settlements develop there in the form of what we usually consider to be Greek colonies. It suffices to consider two well-published dugout dwellings of the sixth century B.C. at Nymphaeum. These show substantial Kizil Koba pottery together with archaic Greek and other wares (notably amphorae and fine wares imported from the Aegean). This pottery

<sup>78</sup> Kutaisov (2004).

<sup>79</sup> As appreciated by S. West (2002) 439, despite her scepticism. Corcella ad loc. grasps the geography well, but assumes that Theodosia marks a Taurian limit, with consequent confusion. By contrast with the area around Theodosia, the peninsula becomes notably rocky as one proceeds up the eastern Crimea past Mt. Opuk, Mt. Mithridates and on to Cape Fonar and its environs by Porthmium.

<sup>80</sup> See further Hind (1987).

<sup>81</sup> Further Stolba (2011) with bibliography. On western 'Taurians', see Kravchenko (2011).

(and even what may be ‘Taurian’ stone tools there) indicates well enough the reality of a ‘Taurian’ cultural presence in the developing colonies of the early European Bosphorus.<sup>82</sup> Certainly, a host of related issues remain in dispute about these and similar dwellings, while particular caution is required in applying ethnic labels to the inhabitants of these dwellings, but the substantial presence of Kizil Koba pottery is clear and conforms with our larger picture. Kizil Koba pottery is known across the eastern Crimea: to the dugouts of Nymphaeum we may add, for example, the Kizil Koba pottery found in sixth-century Myrmecium, whose inhabitants lived in dugouts for many decades.<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, there is also significant Kizil Koba pottery in the area of Porthmium-Parthenium.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, rather by contrast with the image of committed brigands that we have from Herodotus’ account of the Taurians, the Kizil Koba culture was much engaged in agricultural pursuits and stock rearing. Evidently there was a difference between the economies of the mountains and the lowlands: the mountains were better suited to brigandage and piracy on the rocky coast nearby, and they offered fewer alternative economic opportunities. Rather as Pseudo-Scymnus observes there was a considerable variety among the many Taurians. However, there is no reason to think that they differed in their religious practice.

Accordingly, Herodotus and the archaeological record provide an extensive vision of Taurian culture, which in turn suggests an extensive range across the Crimea for the cult of Parthenos amongst them. For her cult among the Taurians stretched, like their material culture, from west to east, from Cercinitis and the Parthenium outside Chersonesus as far as the Parthenium on the straits of the Bosphorus. While the Greeks who came from Heraclea and perhaps elsewhere to found Chersonesus embraced the goddess, and considered themselves embraced by her, the very existence of Parthenium in the Bosphorus suggests that the Milesian settlers there did much the same. The greater prominence of the goddess in the south-western Crimea is readily explicable given the great strength of Taurian culture there, hard by the mountains themselves, and the strong concerns

<sup>82</sup> On the Nymphaeum dugouts, see Butjagin (1997). Dupont (2002) illustrates the widespread use of dugout dwellings in and beyond the Black Sea, with their many advantages in new, harsh and dangerous climates; further, Lehr (1992) on settlers in Canada. It must be stressed that the term ‘dugout’ (or semi-dugout) has been applied to a wide range of pits of different kinds, sizes and, doubtless, uses.

<sup>83</sup> Vinogradov, Butyagin and Vakhtina (2003) 808–9 with important information also on pottery that seems to have come from the Kuban region. On these dugouts and the naming of Myrmecium, see below.

<sup>84</sup> Senatorov (2013).

of its settlers too with the Megarian-Boeotian and Heracleote traditions that we have discussed.

### **Iphigenia and Achilles**

As we have seen, Herodotus tells us that the Taurians identify their Parthenos with Iphigenia, presumably when dealing with Greeks in particular. The consequences for our understanding of the Bosporan crossing are very considerable. For we can now see how that crossing may be understood as joining Achilles on the Asiatic side with Iphigenia on the Crimean side in the form of Parthenos. Given the fundamental myth that had brought Iphigenia to the Taurians in Greek tradition, and perhaps also Taurian tradition by the fifth century, we can only surmise that the myths told at these two cult-centres were interwoven, rather as the sites themselves were linked across the waters by the crossing there. The ongoing recollection and ritual performance of such myths made them part of a present and continuing reality, while bringing together the different places and people involved in them.<sup>85</sup> That was all the more important in the Bosporan kingdom, with its disjointed geography and soup of traditions, consisting of many different Greek traditions as well as an extraordinary array of non-Greek cultures.

At the same time, Parthenos-Iphigenia's connection across the straits with Achilles underlines her identity as a *parthenos*. For it was the expectation of marriage to Achilles that had brought Iphigenia to Aulis and, instead of marriage, to sacrifice and transition to a life in the Crimea, even as the deity herself. It is not too fanciful, perhaps, to see the geography of the couple, divided by the waters, as an expression of their disconnected relationship. For while the crossing links them, their cult-centres remain on either side of the straits, fixed at a distance apart. Moreover, with that in mind, we may consider again the geography of the other Parthenium outside Chersonesus. That comparable cape might be considered in a variety of ways, but we should observe that Achilles here too lay across the waters from Parthenos, albeit at a greater distance. For Leuke, 'White Island', lay across the sea. This was the locus of a cult-centre of Achilles that was far more familiar in the Greek world than its Bosporan counterpart, for it offered a rare staging-post for those who would sail to and from Chersonesus and the other destinations of the northwest Black Sea.<sup>86</sup> It

<sup>85</sup> Further, Kowalzig (2007).

<sup>86</sup> Hedreen (1991); Rusyayeva (2002); Hupe (2006); Okhotnikov and Ostroverkhov (2007).



Figure 4 Sea rocks at Myrmecium viewed from its acropolis

had also featured in Greek literature since archaic times.<sup>87</sup> The fourth century BC account of Pseudo-Scylax is particularly suggestive in this regard, for it indicates the options that faced those who would sail from the mouth of the Danube to the southern Crimea. They might follow the coast in a great arc via Tyras and Olbia, or they might halve the length of their voyage by making a 72-hour dash across the open sea: the island of Leuke offered landfall close to the north of such a crossing, were it needed, presided over by Achilles and, it seems, best avoided at night.<sup>88</sup> That was the way that Euripides had Orestes and Pylades sail en route to the Taurians, though of course their precise route cannot be plotted. Euripides was concerned to exploit the allusion to Achilles, both geographically and, for the reasons we have seen, thematically in the whole story of Agamemnon's family and the peculiar relationship between Iphigenia and Achilles.<sup>89</sup>

The location and name of Myrmecium also evoke Achilles across the straits of the Crimean Bosphorus. For Strabo presents Myrmecium too as in some sense across the sea from Achilleum, in a later book of his *Geography*, where he returns to these waters from the Asiatic side (II. 2. 6 and 8). Although he says nothing of a direct sailing from Achilleum to Myrmecium, such crossings were readily made. Moreover, Myrmecium constituted a good landmark, for Ptolemy the geographer has the straits

<sup>87</sup> Bravo (2001); cf. also above on the *Cypria*.

<sup>88</sup> Ps. Scylax, *Periplus* 68. 4 with Shipley (2011); cf. Arrian, *Periplus* 21–3 on the perils of night there.

<sup>89</sup> See esp. Hall (1987) noting also the Racecourse of Achilles in the play's geography.



Figure 5 Panticaepeum acropolis ('Mt. Mithridates') viewed from Myrmecium

(as usual, conceived as part of Maeotis) begin there. In late antiquity the anonymous *Periplus* shares the view that Myrmecium stands at the threshold of a new stretch of water, which begins as one sails north into the narrows and past Porthmium-Parthenium (*Periplus* 12γ5). The town itself (the *Periplus* terms it a *polikhnion*) occupies a carbuncular hill, which is also a promontory, across the bay from the much higher acropolis of Panticaepeum. Although it is tucked inside the northern side of the bay, it is not hard to imagine that sailors perceived Myrmecium as the place where the narrows began as they sailed northwards into the Sea of Azov.

The physical appearance of Myrmecium's hill might be taken to account for its curious name, which seems to be derived from the Greek word *murmex*, 'ant'. The coinage of Myrmecium, known from the fifth century BC, features a prominent ant on the obverse of its small denominations, exploiting the peculiar name of the community as a striking and punning symbol, in the way that Greek coins often do.<sup>90</sup> In principle, the name

<sup>90</sup> Further, Shelov (1978) 19. Note also Sir Arthur Evans' concern with the matter, having visited Kerch: Evans (1887) 174.

might suggest that the site somehow resembles an ant,<sup>91</sup> though that is hard to see in the terrain there today. A case has also been made that the name derives from rocks just offshore, since *murmex* may indeed denote a concealed reef.<sup>92</sup> For, as we shall see, the ant was regarded among Greeks overwhelmingly as resident and active beneath the surface, whether of the earth, of the skin or indeed of the sea. However, the ant image cannot be brushed aside: the offshore rocks are certainly a notable feature in the seascape, now as in antiquity, but it is not at all obvious how they might have been considered reminiscent of ants, or indeed an ant-hill (the most natural translation of the name). Accordingly, it remains unclear how the offshore rocks might have come to characterise the whole settlement as Myrmecium, while in fact they stand proud of the sea and are clearly visible in normal conditions. Ultimately, we need not rule out the possibility that some in antiquity imagined the marine *murmex* to be relevant, but the peculiar coin-image of the ant combines with the toponym to suggest that the dominant interpretation in antiquity concerned ants, and that Myrmecium is to be translated as 'Ant-hill'.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, the fact that the ant image on coins is sometimes accompanied by a legend indicating Panticapaeum (or occasionally another community of the region) encourages the suspicion that these communities had formed some agreement over coinage and even a broader federal arrangement in coinage by the time of its appearance in the fifth century BC, such as we find more clearly elsewhere in the Greek world.<sup>94</sup>

And that conclusion is confirmed by the fact that the notion of human societies as communities of ants was not extraordinary in antiquity: most famously, Plato compares the Greeks around the Mediterranean and Black Sea shores with frogs and ants arrayed around a puddle of water (*Phaedo* 109b). However, within this broad notion there was only one group of Greeks which was strongly associated with ants. These were the Myrmidons, whose link with ants is at least as old as Hesiod and was exploited also by Pindar and others, notably Ovid.<sup>95</sup> In the *Iliad* of course they were the

<sup>91</sup> Cf. the scholion on the ant-spider (*Myrmecium*) at Nicander, *Theriaca* 747, a creature so named 'because it looks like an ant': further, Scarborough (1979) 13.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Hdt. 7. 183 with Vinogradov, Butyagin and Vakhtina (2003) 803 (with bibliography), who observe the rarity of ant-coinage at Myrmecium. Of the 140 or so coins known from the region with this image (V. Stolba, *pers. comm.*) only a single hemiobol has been found at Myrmecium in the context of extensive distribution on both sides of the straits. Further, Frolova (2002), arguing that denomination may be a factor.

<sup>93</sup> LSJ *s.v.*

<sup>94</sup> Psoma and Tsangari (2003); Mackil and van Alfen (2006); Mackil (2013); Beck and Funke (2014).

<sup>95</sup> *Met.* 7. 614–60; cf. Carnes (1990); Forbes Irving (1990) 315; Hansen (2000).



followers of Achilles, so that again we may suspect a mythical link between a location on the east coast of the Crimea and the site of Achilles' cult at Achilleum across the waters.<sup>96</sup> Since excavation has revealed the extensive use of dugout structures and also substantial wall-building in the archaic levels, which is interpreted as fortification,<sup>97</sup> it is possible that the extensive digging on the hill from c. 575 onwards gave rise to its name, for Greeks saw ants primarily as earth workers.<sup>98</sup> In this regard, we should observe a broad change in the modern understanding of the role of dugouts in the colonisation of the northern Black Sea. After much debate, it now seems clear enough that old notions of an extensive early phase of dugout usage across the region must be revised in many aspects. Now some agreement seems to be emerging around the view that dugout dwellings were used only in certain places to any significant extent, and perhaps for a lesser period than used to be supposed.<sup>99</sup> If that is right, we may well understand how energetic excavation on the hill of Myrmecium could have received special attention in the region.

However that may be, this community of 'ant-men' will at the very least have encouraged reflection on Achilles, his Myrmidons in Trojan epic and (in view of the local importance of Parthenos-Iphigenia in the Crimea) the story of Iphigenia. The abiding concern with Achilles in the Bosporan kingdom, and in its rhetoric, is nicely illustrated by the inscribed laudation of a high Bosporan official, who is said to have played Chiron to his king's Achilles under the Roman empire.<sup>100</sup> While Achilles had Myrmidons, the Bosporan king had under his command not only Myrmecium, but also the cult-centres of Parthenos-Iphigenia, and Achilles himself at the threshold of Maeotis. Of particular interest in this regard is a passing comment of Leo Diaconus, claiming Arrian as his source:

Arrian says in his *Periplus* that Achilles son of Peleus was a Scythian, from the town called Myrmecium, located by Lake Maeotis, and that he was expelled by the Scythians because of his viciousness, savagery and arrogance, and settled in Thessaly. (Leo Diaconus 9. 6)

<sup>96</sup> There is some reason to suspect that Myrmecium may also have been known as Apollonia, at least in the earlier centuries of its existence, but our literary texts give only Myrmecium: further, Shelov (1978) 19, but Stolba (2016) takes a better approach.

<sup>97</sup> Vinogradov (2008); cf. Vinogradov and Tokhtas'yev (1994).

<sup>98</sup> See further Carnes (1990) on ants as diggers; cf. Hdt. 3. 102.

<sup>99</sup> Surikov (2015) offers a persuasive compromise. The identification of such dwellings (as opposed to cellars, etc.) remains awkward for past excavations, while the use of them should not be perceived as a mark of retarded development, for they have their advantages: further, Dupont 2002.

<sup>100</sup> Bowersock and Jones (2006).

This passage is problematic, certainly, but it demands serious attention nevertheless, and has seldom received it.<sup>101</sup> The main problem is that Leo (writing around the end of the tenth century)<sup>102</sup> is mistaken in his attribution of this story to Arrian's *Periplus*. For it does not occur in the text of that work as we have it, though there is a great deal there about Achilles' cult on Leuke. Leo or his source has misattributed the story, but it might still be Arrian's, given his *Bithyniaka* and Achilles' importance in and about Bithynia, not least at Sigeum.<sup>103</sup> Leo may be forgiven for the error. The story would not have been out of place in the *Periplus*, given the mythical concerns that Arrian shows in that work and his mention of Myrmecium there. Nor would it be a great surprise to find this author on Alexander to have offered a story about Achilles, even if only to reject its plausibility perhaps. Most important, we should not infer from Leo's misattribution to the *Periplus* that he had not found the story in an earlier account, whether or not a work of Arrian. Especially so, since we have from much earlier than Arrian a tradition that seems to place Achilles in Scythia, most famously archaic Alcaeus' allusion to Achilles as 'lord of Scythia', noted above.<sup>104</sup> Meanwhile, rather as with the Tauropolos traditions, the story seems also to use the northern Black Sea to account for the presence of savage behaviour among Greeks, as we shall see in the [next chapter](#). While Achilles may have been too savage for Myrmecium, it was a Scythian Achilles who brought his savagery to Thessaly and thereafter to the Trojan War, as Leo proceeds to remark, including even the human sacrifice of Trojan captives. At the same time, we may observe too the familiar circularity of myth in this story insofar as the Thessalian influences that came into the Black Sea with the Argo and more besides, were made by this story to be connected through Achilles with the region already. It hardly matters that the chronology within these myths does not bear close examination.<sup>105</sup> We may be sure enough that much was made of all this at Myrmecium, which otherwise had little claim to fame. It is at least an interesting coincidence that a

<sup>101</sup> Shaub (2007) 366–7 appreciates its potential, but his claims that ants are part of Achilles' chthonic nature head in an awkward direction.

<sup>102</sup> We should observe the particular relevance of the north Black Sea to Leo, not least through the actions of Svyatoslav I of Kiev.

<sup>103</sup> This offers an intriguing angle on Dio Chrysostom's presentation of Olbian obsession with Achilles in his speech on Olbia (*Or.* 36, the *Borystheniticus*), which was addressed to the people of Bithynian Prusa.

<sup>104</sup> Pinney (1983); Saunders (2012) with bibliography. In rejecting Pinney's view, Hedreen (1991) 324 overlooks Leo-Arrian, while noting Eustathius, *Commentary on Dionys. Perieg.* 306 and the discussion it implies.

<sup>105</sup> Further, Braund (2014a).



splendid sarcophagus, deposited in a rich burial near Myrmecium around AD 200, was decorated with images of Achilles, which included Chiron, perhaps rather awkwardly and yet especially in keeping with the observable discourse of the Bosporan elite.<sup>106</sup>

Finally on these connections, we should observe too that it was not only Achilles who had an association with these Myrmidon ant-men. In the fifth century BC, Pindar makes it abundantly clear that Aeginetans of the day revelled in the notion that the metamorphosis of ants into men for Achilles' grandfather, Aeacus, happened on their island, Aegina.<sup>107</sup> Eustathius, commenting on the Iliad, explains the ant-identity of these Myrmidons of Aegina precisely in terms of their earth working:

Those who treat the myth in historical terms say that the Aeginetans are diggers, who scoop out cave-like pits in the ground, and dwell down in these dugouts. As for the earth they throw up, they spread it as earth good for crops, because the island is rugged on the surface, but good below. For this reason, however, those who do this look like ants to those who see them. And because of their lifestyle that is, as it were, an ant-life, they were given the name Myrmidons. (Eustathius, *Commentary on Homer's Iliad* I. 122)<sup>108</sup>

In this remarkable and neglected passage, we have not only a rare allusion to dugout dwellings, but an explicit presentation of such a lifestyle as an 'ant-life', confirming our interpretation of the naming of Myrmecium. True, Eustathius was writing in the twelfth century AD, so that it may be urged perhaps that his is not an authentically classical outlook. But he is here clearly drawing upon earlier authorities, as in his preceding discussion of the mythographic tradition on Myrmidons, where Lycophron is cited by name. It is regrettable that he does not name any of his historicising authorities in the same way, but he is clearly giving us an approach and analysis that is much older than his own day, presumably on a par with the

<sup>106</sup> On these and Achilles in the art of the north Black Sea, see Vinogradov (2015b), with extensive bibliography. On the sarcophagus itself, see also Saverkina (1979); Vinogradov (2015a); Vinogradov and Butyagin (2016). Kreuz (2009) shows that it was unlikely to have held a king: the elite of Myrmecium are more plausible. Note also the fifth-century dedication to a nymph there: Vinogradov and Tokhtas'yev (1998) no. 4 (unnecessarily pluralised). Mela 2. 3 at least saw Parthenos as a nymph, but any link at Myrmecium is unclear.

<sup>107</sup> See the essays collected in Fearn (2011) among which Nagy (2011) 55–7 gathers other examples of human descent from ants, both Greek and non-Greek, which raises the question of whether Scythians may have had such notions too; cf. also Polinskaya (2013).

<sup>108</sup> οἱ δὲ τὸν μῦθον ἱστορικῶς θεραπεύοντες γεωρῦχος τοὺς Αἰγινήτας εἶναι φασὶ κοιλαίνοντας τὴν γῆν δίκην σπηλαίων καὶ ὑπὸ μὲν τὰς καταδύσεις οἰκοῦντας, τὸ δὲ ἀναβαλλόμενον χῶμα εἰς εὐχρηστον καρποῖς γῆν διαπεταννύοντας διὰ τὸ τὴν νῆσον τὰ μὲν ἄνω τραχεῖαν εἶναι, ἀγαθὴν δὲ τὰ ἔνερθεν. διὰ τοῦτο τοίνυν τοὺς ταῦτα ποιοῦντας μύρμηξιν εἰκάζοντες οἱ ἰδόντες διὰ τὸ τῆς διαίτης, ὡς εἰπεῖν, μυρμηκόβιον Μυρμιδόνας ἐπεκάλουσι αὐτούς.

mythographic tradition he used. In fact, over a millennium earlier Strabo had written of the ants of Aegina in terms very similar to Eustathius' formulation:

It is said that the Aeginetans were called Myrmidons – not as the myth has it (because, when a great famine occurred, the ants became human beings in answer to a prayer of Aeacus), but because they excavated the earth after the manner of ants and spread the soil over the rocks, so as to have ground to till, and because they lived in the dugouts, refraining from the use of soil for bricks. (Strabo 8. 6. 17)

Whether Aeginetans played any part in the foundation of Myrmecium, or were ever thought to have done so, is quite beyond our knowledge: we do not know who founded it and certainly have no name of an oikist (a Myrmex is not impossible). As for Aeginetan activity in the region, however, it is perhaps worth remembering Herodotus' report that Xerxes saw merchant vessels leaving the region's waters with grain for Aegina.<sup>109</sup> While we have no idea where they had loaded, this is a rare indication that the famous seafarers of Aegina were concerned with the broader region, and so may well have had some sense of their 'relations' at Myrmecium. Meanwhile, we should not overlook either the Thessalian dimension of the Myrmidons, who went from Aegina to Phthia. Although detail is lacking, we should observe that the Thessalian roots of Phanagoria across the waters gave yet another opportunity for mythical connectivities.<sup>110</sup>

### **Parthenos at Panticapaeum and Nymphaeum?**

In the Bosporan heartland south of Myrmecium, there are further signs of Parthenos' cult, but they are fleeting. Panticapaeum and Nymphaeum are best treated in tandem in this regard, because their divine associations seem to be as closely interwoven as their civic histories. The coinage of Panticapaeum, featuring a Pan or satyr head, gives a strong indication that the city derived its name from Pan. That is probably the key context for the dedication by Arcadians to the Bosporan ruler Leucon I, who is named, exceptionally for such a ruler, 'Panticapaitan', evidently to underscore the link to Pan, the chief deity of the Arcadians (CIRB 37). It is tempting indeed to suppose that the Pan of Panticapaeum was involved also with the unnamed nymph of neighbouring Nymphaeum, but we have no knowledge of the myths that must have explained these connections. However,

<sup>109</sup> Hdt. 7. 147 and the Peloponnese: note that Athens is not mentioned.

<sup>110</sup> Braund (2014a).

the fact that Artemis in particular was very much at home both with Pan and with nymphs encourages the suspicion that Crimean Parthenos was part of these traditions. It would be good to know, for example, whether Pan featured in the stories that Arcadians told about Iphigenia (Paus. 1. 43. 1). Probabilities apart, however, we must be clear about the limits of our evidence, while balancing that against the extensive influence of Taurian culture and the fact of Parthenium in the northeast corner of the Bosphoran kingdom.

At Nymphaeum we have no direct evidence of Parthenos' cult.<sup>111</sup> Her presence is usually argued at Panticapaeum, though again the direct evidence is poor, indeed poorer than usually allowed.<sup>112</sup> A single inscription of around AD 200 (CIRB 74) is usually cited to demonstrate her presence there.<sup>113</sup> However, while the crucial part of the text certainly gives the word *parthenos* (in the genitive, *parthenou*), damage to the stone leaves a doubt as to whether this is the goddess. Especially so, as the text concerns a young mortal female, herself perhaps a *parthenos*. At the same time, however, our difficulties in locating Parthenos in Nymphaeum and Panticapaeum are in no way a decisive indication of her absence. Pan himself is nowhere attested in an inscription from Panticapaeum or anywhere else in the Bosphoran kingdom.

At Nymphaeum it is presumably the head of the eponymous nymph that appears on the civic coinage from the last quarter of the fifth century. In all likelihood she was accorded a key role in the foundation of the community. Such a nymph must be a creature of the place in which the city was established.<sup>114</sup> More generally, it has been well observed that, while nymphs attend Artemis in epic and some Hellenistic poetry, archaic and classical Greek literature associate them instead with Dionysus, Aphrodite, Hermes and Pan, whose local relevance we have noted.<sup>115</sup> The coins of Nymphaeum indicate that Dionysus was of particular importance there, for on the reverse we find grapes and vine branches. Indeed, the importance of Dionysus at Nymphaeum has become all the clearer in recent years with the excavation of a theatre complex on the acropolis of the city, with a fine entrance dedicated to Dionysus by a man who had presided over his festival there in the fourth century BC.<sup>116</sup> Pan, of course, is

<sup>111</sup> Further, [Chapter 4](#).

<sup>112</sup> Tokhtas'jev (1993).

<sup>113</sup> E.g. LIMC Suppl. s.v. Parthenos.

<sup>114</sup> Further, Larson (2001).

<sup>115</sup> Larson (1997).

<sup>116</sup> Braund and Hall (2014) with bibliography.

a familiar associate of Dionysus, as of nymphs.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, while Artemis both associates with nymphs and may herself be a leading nymph, we may observe Dionysus' presence at Halae Araphenides, though his connection with the cult of Artemis Tauropolos there remains obscure.<sup>118</sup>

However, it is Parthenos' association with a nymph or nymphs across the Crimea at Chersonesus that gives some reason to suspect that she had also a role at Nymphaeum. For the geographer Pomponius Mela offers a surprising detail about a nymphs' cave at Chersonesus in the first century AD:

The town of Chersonesus lies nearby, founded (if one believes it) by Diana, and extremely famous for its Nymphs' Cave, which has been consecrated to the nymphs on its acropolis.<sup>119</sup>

Moreover, neighbouring Thrace offers parallels for such a cave in association with a local Parthenos, who must be Mela's Diana (Artemis).<sup>120</sup> The Taurian deity mattered to Mela, for as a man who moved in imperial circles in the first century AD, Mela must have been aware of Diana's cult at Lake Nemi, which was of special interest to Augustus and his successors.<sup>121</sup>

Since we know that Parthenos' cult-buildings at Chersonesus were located on the low acropolis, probably beneath the present Cathedral of St Vladimir,<sup>122</sup> it may well be that the famous cave (as Mela has it) should be imagined as part of the same complex, whether a natural or artificial creation there.<sup>123</sup> Mela's cave should not be doubted, despite the fact that it does not appear in the city's epigraphy. For it is mentioned again in a Byzantine work on Christian activities at Chersonesus in the later fourth century AD, which included the destruction of Parthenos' temple in the city. In that work the cave had the name Parthenon, appropriately enough for this 'Cave of Diana', and was clearly located inside the city.<sup>124</sup> There Basil apparently enjoyed a right of asylum, which saved him from the baying crowd.<sup>125</sup> We should observe too the presence of a cave in the tradition on Orestes and Pylades, who shelter in a cave on arrival in the land

<sup>117</sup> E.g. Jaccottet (2003) 2. 106–7 and *passim*.

<sup>118</sup> Further, Kahil (1991) 516–17. On Dionysus at Halae: Bonnechere (1994) 52; Bathrellou (2012).

<sup>119</sup> *Oppidum adiacet Cherronesus, a Diana, si creditur, conditum, et nymphaeo specu, quod in arce eius nymphis sacratum est, maximum illustre* (Mela 2.3).

<sup>120</sup> On these, Braund (2007a).

<sup>121</sup> Guldager Bilde (2003).

<sup>122</sup> Bondarenko (2007) 86–7.

<sup>123</sup> Latyshev (1906) 50–4; Braund (2007a); cf. in general, Ustinova (2009a).

<sup>124</sup> *Lives of the bishops of Cherson*, esp. *Basil* 4; for text, Russian translation and topographical discussion, see Mogarichev (2012).

<sup>125</sup> As long ago observed by Latyshev (1906) 52–3; cf. Bondarenko (2007) 85–6.

of the Taurians,<sup>126</sup> though this need not be the *Parthenon*. Meanwhile, the reality of Mela's cave allays any disquiet that we have no mention of his nymphs either in the considerable epigraphy of the city or in any other text, despite Mela's talk of the fame of their cave. Our problem is to explicate these nymphs, and perhaps the nymph at Nymphaeum, in terms of Parthenos cult. At Chersonesus at least we have the names of females who might be relevant.

### Parthenos in Chersonesus

Mela was much more at home at Lake Nemi than in the Crimea, of which he is most unlikely to have had personal experience: there perspectives on Parthenos were very different, as we have begun to see. At Chersonesus and across the region, stories were centred on the bringing of civilisation into the region. That strong colonialist ideology in the region was to be found also in the rest of Greek culture, where Greek arrival in the Black Sea either limited or put an end to endemic savagery there. Illustrative is the story of the skinning Heniochi in Colchis. Heraclides Lembus writes of them only to proceed on the colonialist theme of improvement through Greek culture. For he tells how the arrival of Milesian colonists meant that the shipwrecked were treated very honourably and hospitably on the Colchian shore, where previously they had been skinned.<sup>127</sup> Considering the whole phenomenon Strabo offers a vision of a Black Sea which had been Inhospitable, *Axenos*, in its violence and intractability, thanks to its human and physical geography, but which had been rendered truly Hospitable, *Euxenos*, by Greek settlement around its shores. If the locals had not been civilised, they had at least been brought under a measure of control, however incomplete.<sup>128</sup> Of course, the Taurians continued to kill even after Strabo's day, as their destruction of a Claudian cohort shows (*Tac. Ann.* 12. 17), but such problems hardly dented the hellenocentric edifice of Greek colonialist ideology, whereby Greeks had made the Black Sea world a much better place. Moreover, it is clear enough that the Bosporan kingdom and Chersonesus had done much to restrict Taurian brigandage, which was now indeed limited to the mountains. The Taurian depredation of the cohort had no doubt been encouraged and facilitated by the general

<sup>126</sup> E.g. Hyg. *Fab.* 1. 20.

<sup>127</sup> Her. Lembus fr. 49 with Braund (1994); cf. Ivantchik (2017).

<sup>128</sup> On *Axenos/Euxe(i)nos*, Strabo 7. 3. 6–7; cf. 17. 1 (Busiris' *axenia*).

upheaval across the Crimea caused by the very Bosporean War from which the cohort was returning.

Meanwhile, we should observe the central role of religion in all this. Greek deities constituted an orientating and controlling presence across the region, from Zeus at the entrance to the Black Sea all around its shores, as we have seen in some detail to the west and east of the Crimea. At the same time, the very notion of hospitality tended to evoke Zeus for Greeks, so that his strategically placed temple echoed the claim that it was Greeks who had brought civilised values and practices into the Black Sea. Further, Greek deities were all the more credible and effective across the region insofar as they bestrode simple divisions between Greeks and non-Greeks. While Herodotus illustrates the scope for syncretic thinking among Greeks and Scythians,<sup>129</sup> we have observed how some deities had a particularly strong local identity, in Greek eyes and also in the developing ideology of the colonial communities and their neighbours through later centuries. From early archaic times Achilles had a Scythian as well as a Greek face in Greek culture, not least by virtue of the savagery which he seemed to share with Scythian culture. Homer does not mention that, but there was nevertheless something distinctly Scythian from a Greek perspective in Achilles' human sacrifice in the *Iliad* and his gruesome treatment of Hector's body.<sup>130</sup> It was appropriate therefore that his own body should be taken to Leuke on the Scythian periphery. Similarly, Heracles, who was not only animalian in his violence and his lionskin dress, but also rather Scythian insofar as he regularly carried a Scythian bow and was involved with Scythians in a variety of stories. While Herodorus of Heraclea Pontica has him learn archery and take his very bow from a Scythian herdsman of his father (a certain Teutaros), the hero appears as the Scythian forefather in a story which Herodotus seems to have gleaned in the northwest Black Sea at Tyras and Olbia, only a decade or two earlier. Given the connected cultural development of the Greeks of the region and local elites, it is no surprise to find Achilles and Heracles sported by powerful Scythians in their finest armour and horse-trappings.<sup>131</sup>

That is the broad framework within which we must understand the role of Parthenos in Chersonesus, where we are well informed, and almost certainly also in the Bosporean kingdom, where we are not. This is not a tale of bloody rites brought into the Greek community from local savagery,

<sup>129</sup> Esp. Hdt. 4. 59) where Greek Zeus is Scythian Papaïos, for example.

<sup>130</sup> Pinney (1983).

<sup>131</sup> On Heracles as the Scythian forefather, see further Braund (2011b).

as far as we hear. We hear nothing of ritual bloodletting in any form at Chersonesus. And there is no sign of Tauropolos anywhere across the region: she is a deity for those at a distance from the Crimea. Again, there is no sign at all of Parthenos' identification with Artemis there, however much her iconography might encourage us and other outsiders to think of it. We have seen that Iphigenia was more important as her alter ego locally, as Herodotus reports of the Taurians, while her link with Achilles tends to confirm his testimony. At the same time, however, we may be sure that her similarity to Artemis was no less obvious to the Chersonitans than it is to us, while they will also have become aware of Euripides' play, for example, in which the goddess is very much Artemis, and is neither Iphigenia nor a local Parthenos. Evidently, the people of Chersonesus were able to retain their own local sense of Parthenos while also acknowledging (and probably exploiting) the available identification with Artemis among Greeks elsewhere. For example, the city's ransoming of Delphian theōroi early in the second century BC is likely to have involved some reflection upon the sibling relationship of Artemis and Pythian Apollo, which was also important for the famous play. Moreover, while the isolated tradition, around 100 BC, that Delians had some role in the foundation of the city may not have been important in the city itself, there is every likelihood at least that Chersonesus' broader concern with Delos (which had its own Chersonesus) entailed the association of the city's goddess with Delian cults, whether as Artemis, as Iphigenia or in some other fashion. In sum, the two different conceptions of Parthenos, in Chersonesus and around the larger Greek world, were often to meet, and flexibility and accommodation (perhaps with an element of competition too) were more beneficial to all concerned than any sense of alienation or hostility.

In Chersonesus, Parthenos appears regularly in public inscriptions and on the civic coinage, so that we have quite a strong sense of her role in the city, although there is also much that we do not know. We find that Parthenos was very much the protectress of the community: she is attested as the city's saviour already in the fourth century.<sup>132</sup> Her epiphanies were a key part of civic history,<sup>133</sup> set out by Syriacus, who was honoured for his work in the third century BC, but his history covered earlier times. Her key role in the city emerges not only through the civic habit of depositing public decrees in her temple in the city,<sup>134</sup> but also and most strikingly in

<sup>132</sup> IOSPE i<sup>2</sup> 343, where her role is clear enough despite the fragmentary nature of the inscription: further, Braund and Hall (2014).

<sup>133</sup> See Petridou (2015) locating Parthenos in the wider context of epiphanies.

<sup>134</sup> In the *pronaos*: IOSPE i<sup>2</sup> 344; 353; cf. NERKh 12.

her appearance in the civic oath of the people of Chersonesus, as we have it in an inscription cut there early in the third century BC, at much the same time that Syriscus was honoured. The oath concerns the military, economic, political and religious security of the community: it was sworn by ‘Zeus, Earth, Sun, Parthenos, the Olympian gods and Olympian goddesses and the heroes, who have the city, territory and forts of the Chersonesitans’ (IOSPE i<sup>2</sup> 401). In this oath Parthenos is picked out for special mention, after the still greater and elemental forces of Zeus, Earth and Sun. She is distinct from the Olympian goddesses, who must include Artemis. She is named again in the same company later in the oath, while it is probable that she also is key to the secret rites and the *saster* (most likely *belt*)<sup>135</sup> which are among the key things to be guarded by the oath-taker.

Parthenos is of the first importance too in the other great inscription from Chersonesus, which set out the honours given to Diophantus and details of his deeds late in the second century BC, as general of Mithridates Eupator in the Crimea and beyond.<sup>136</sup> This remarkable general had ranged across the region, including major actions in defence of the city’s interests to the west (far beyond Cercinitis), and for the last of the Spartocids, Paerisades V, in the Bosphorus to the east. The inscription is explicit that Parthenos had once again played a key role. For when the Scythian king had mustered his forces and Roxolanian allies against the city’s possessions, ‘the eternal protectress of the Chersonesitans, Parthenos, then too was present with Diophantus. She foretold what was to happen through the signs which occurred in the hieron, and she inspired all the army with courage and daring.’ It was particularly appropriate then that the city honoured Diophantus with a bronze statue of the general himself, in arms (on whose base our text was cut), which was set ‘on the acropolis beside the altar of Parthenos and that of Chersonesus’. The latter is especially interesting: she may be among the nymphs mentioned by Mela. Her name here suggests her embodiment of the city and its locale, though she was not named in the civic oath. Moreover, Diophantus was to be awarded a gold crown ‘at the

<sup>135</sup> Gavrilov (1998); cf. SEG 59. 812 for less plausible hypothesis: this might be Parthenos’ belt, but Leto’s *zoster* had cult, e.g. in Attica at another Halai (Vari), where Euripides himself is said to have participated as torch-bearer: *Life* 2. On Leto in the Black Sea, Avram (2009), noting the month of Leto in the calendar of Byzantium and Chersonesus (Latoios: SEG 46. 930, second century AD). Artemis is not attested as a month at Chersonesus. Gavrilov’s interpretation strengthens the case for interpreting graffiti from Chersonesus in terms of Apollo, Artemis and Leto: Solomonik (1978) 15. On terracottas which may show Leto, see Guldager Bilde (2009) 306, arguing that they are Dionysiac. For belts in archaeology, see Klebinder (2001), noting too Hdt. 1. 52.

<sup>136</sup> IOSPE i<sup>2</sup> 352; further, Gavrilov (1996).



festival of Parthenos in the procession', where an honorific announcement was also to be made. The festival is named as the Partheneia.

Diophantus' inscription is extraordinary, not least in its detailed narrative of the general's activities, but it shows also how regular was the defence of the community by Parthenos in the eyes of its inhabitants. She was with the general in his victories, though we are not told that she manifested herself on the battlefield. She also inspired the troops with prophecy, which presumably included assurance of victory. Signs had been seen in her *hieron*, which might be her cult-centre in the city or that outside it on Cape Parthenium: these seem to have been a recurrent feature of her activity for the city. The goddess explained and assured the city's success, in conjunction with Mithridates' general, but the inscription stops just short of reporting her epiphany, for all her undoubted presence.<sup>137</sup> Clearly, Diophantus' statue was to stand on the urban acropolis by her altar, but the fact that her festival evidently centred upon a procession (at which the general was crowned) indicates the connection between her urban and extra-urban centre on Cape Parthenium. Meanwhile, bearing in mind Parthenos' significance also for the Bosporan kingdom, we should note how much is said about the general's actions there too, though our text is not explicit that Parthenos had any role in those Bosporan successes.

Chersonesus and the Bosporan kingdom had common interests in many ways. The city's decision to embrace Diophantus' actions in the Bosporus tends to illustrate that, for this was more than a response to overarching control by Mithridates Eupator on both sides of the Crimea. The city and the kingdom shared a major difficulty with the Scythians of the Crimean hinterland. By contrast, the neighbouring Taurians seem to have presented no serious threat. However, the tendency to mutual support between Chersonesus and the Bosporus, as evidenced in Syriscus' history, and the shared concern with Parthenos, went together also with occasional hostilities between these Dorian and Ionian powers. Of particular interest here is the story of Gykia, which we have only late, in the *De administrando imperio* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, written in the tenth century. Indeed, her story – set in the reign of Asander, in the latter half of the first century BC – occupies a wholly disproportionate amount of space in this work which claims to be about the running of the empire a millennium after Gykia.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. IOSPE i<sup>2</sup> 343.

### Gykia's Story

Scholars have long suspected that Gykia is in some sense a version of Parthenos, though exploration of that possibility has become muddled with attempts to locate a real Gykia in history.<sup>138</sup> Her story probably has its roots in Chersonesus' own traditions, as usually claimed. The best evidence for that view is the occasional element of local topographical aetiology that occurs in our text.<sup>139</sup> The case for Gykia's connection with Parthenos is less sure: it rests on her being a young woman who saves the city from its enemies. For she (thanks to another young woman, her maid) discovers a hidden force of armed and malign Bosporans, and orchestrates an effective scheme to kill them all. She is duly honoured with two bronze statues, one showing her as a sober young woman, the other portraying her in action in the killing of the Bosporans, though quite how is not stated. Moreover, she is buried in the centre of the city, with a further statue at the spot. The sense of hero-cult in that location is rather enhanced by her ruse to ensure that the oath to bury her in this place was kept by her fellow-citizens, for she seemed to return to life having earlier pretended to have died.<sup>140</sup> Our text indicates that these three statues and the uplifting inscriptions on their bases were still to be seen in the city in the tenth century. Given the significance of the city in the tenth-century Byzantine empire, that seems unlikely to be simple invention, though it may not be simple fact either. Apart from Porphyrogenitus' account, Gykia is unknown, while her very name lacks any firm parallel anywhere in antiquity.

Unfortunately, Gykia's story resists conclusive interpretation. Unlike Parthenos, she is married: that is important, if less than decisive.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, her marriage to a Bosporan prince (the author of the Bosporan plot) was made for the good of the community, and her response to the plot included the death of her husband. There is no indication of children. Meanwhile, the Byzantine Christian account could hardly acknowledge any divinity in her, though she is said repeatedly to have been 'with God' in saving the city. If, however, we are to see Gykia as Parthenos, we surely need more indication of religion in her story, whether entailing a temple, special powers or the like. Instead, Porphyrogenitus calls attention to

<sup>138</sup> Leschhorn (1993) 68–9 offers good discussion; cf. esp. Saprykin (1987).

<sup>139</sup> Notably, the 'Spy Tower' of Lamachus: *DAI* 53.

<sup>140</sup> At that time she admonished the Chersonitans for breaking their oath by seeking first to bury her outside the city.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Sissa (1990) on *parthenos* of married females, but rarely.

the fact that the story presents a fine model of ethical behaviour: he stresses that Gykia was a young woman who put her commitment to her community at Chersonesus before all private interests. Indeed, that ethical example may help to account for the space given to Gykia in this emperor's work for his son. She resembled other models of virtue as might be found, for example, in Plutarch's *On the virtues of women*, or perhaps among the resourceful women of the Asiatic Bosphorus included in Polyaeus' *Strategems*, who lived up to their Amazonian heritage.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, there is also a sense of the novel about this tale, for resourceful young women proliferate there (notably, *Calligone*, set in the north Black Sea), as also do locations and monuments of dubious or no reality in fact.<sup>143</sup> On the other hand, if the Byzantine emperor had been aware of Gykia as a version of the pagan deity Parthenos, one suspects that he would not have given so much space to her story. Ultimately, the problem abides that, while a young woman saving the city by timely leadership might have many evocations elsewhere, there was an inescapable resonance at Chersonesus with Parthenos, even if the Byzantine emperor was unaware of that. Therefore, we remain unclear about how best to interpret Gykia in this regard, which is especially unfortunate because there are various features of the story which might be rooted in the cult practices surrounding Parthenos: the festal context of the denouement of the plot, the pouring of oil on her house to accelerate its burning,<sup>144</sup> the notion of young men coming from Symbolon Limen (Balaclava) in secret and to a specific total of 200, the use of an underground chamber for their concealment over a remarkably extended period and so on. Whether these are remnants of cult-practice in the city (perhaps the secret rites mentioned in the civic oath) or simply aspects of an uplifting tale remains an elusive question, but these details are at least curious enough, especially when taken together with the Parthenos-like statuary of Gykia, to encourage the suspicion that we do indeed have here a transmogrified version of Chersonitan civic rituals associated with Parthenos, whether entailing the deity herself or a nymph in her entourage, such as the very Chersonesus near whose image (and Parthenos' altar) the fine statue of Diophantus was erected.

<sup>142</sup> Polyaeus, 8. 55; Braund (2007b).

<sup>143</sup> Further, Braund (2005b); cf. Garland (2006). The tower e.g. might recall the observation-tower at Olbia: Hdt. 4. 79.

<sup>144</sup> On torches and Artemis and possible Taurian links, see Hall (2012) ch. 7.

### Conclusions

Two very different conceptions of Parthenos emerge from these extensive considerations. In the Crimea, she is a protectress of the Greek city of Chersonesus and probably of the Bosporan kingdom too. There is no indication that her cult entailed any of the bloodletting familiar around the Mediterranean world. Accordingly, in the Crimea, she is neither Artemis nor Tauropolos. There she is a deity close to nature, commanding the environment and representing order and structure, especially at the capes to west and east of the Crimea, where her cults are best attested at Chersonesus and Bosporan Parthenium respectively. At those extremities Parthenos reached across the waters towards Achilles, her promised spouse as Iphigenia. It was directly from that marriage-sacrifice that she had been whisked to the Taurians by Artemis already in archaic Greek poetry. On that conception of the deity, which the Taurians are said to have supported by c. 425 B.C., the pair had a strong connection, but that was also a bond which could never be realised in actual union, like their abortive marriage. While that connection mattered in Chersonesus, because of the key maritime route past Achilles' Leuke, it was of at least as much importance at the Bosporan crossings. For there Parthenos played her part in holding together the two separated regions of the kingdom's heartland, namely the eastern Crimea (Herodotus' 'rugged peninsula') in Europe and the Taman peninsula across the sea in Asia. However, she is conspicuously absent to the east of the straits: evidently, she remained in the Crimea and never made the crossing, even if she might be imagined as encouraging others to cross, as in Procopius' story of the deer-hunters.

Meanwhile, at Chersonesus and doubtless in the Bosporan kingdom too, Parthenos is a powerful protectress, a martial deity. There is no sign of bloodletting anywhere in her cult around the Crimea, but her potential for violence is very striking. She is an effective hunter: we even see her in the act of killing a stag.<sup>145</sup> She regularly appears too with bow and arrows, again after the manner of Artemis. Both coins and inscriptions of Chersonesus illustrate her martial strength. Above all, she was the great protectress there. Her epiphanies promote and guarantee the security and well-being of the Greek city against threats of every kind, while the honours for Syriacus may further suggest that she also could be deployed to bring together Chersonesus and the Bosporan kingdom, supporting both Greek states against the forces of barbarism represented by Scythians,

<sup>145</sup> Guldager Bilde (2003) draws attention to the unusual violence of this iconography at Chersonesus.

Taurians and others, as well no doubt as against other Greeks, such as the city of Olbia perhaps.<sup>146</sup>

As we have seen, that ideology implies the city's claim that the goddess was now its own, whether or not shared with the Bosporan kingdom, which also claimed her. The honours for Syriacus seem to acknowledge some Bosporan claim to her. Further, if Parthenos were to protect the city against Taurians, she could not easily be their deity any longer, whatever the Taurians themselves may have said. This was evidently a model of appropriation, whereby the deity had moved from the Taurians to the Greeks of the Crimea. The very establishment of Greek communities there further required that she had made that move at the time of civic foundation(s). Indeed, her move within the Crimea reflects the moves variously claimed for her around the wider Greek world through the agency of Orestes and his companions. For, in the Crimea too, we evidently have narratives of her reconfiguration as a deity of the land who had nevertheless become a deity of Greeks. Quite possibly, those Crimean narratives shared the notion developed by Euripides that the Taurians themselves had somehow misconceived the deity. Herodotus' account of Greek colonialist attitudes on the west coast of the Black Sea illustrates well enough a Greek readiness to disrespect local religion and to build tales of local stupidity.<sup>147</sup> Now Parthenos ensured Greek mastery of the landscape, not only across the seas, but also across much of the terrain of the Crimea itself. The underlying ritual is especially clear at Chersonesus, where the community celebrated her with a procession that seems to have linked her cult-centre in the city with its counterpart outside at the extremity of the cape where a second cult-centre stood. And we may see that territorial and military protection expressed together in what is taken to be a trophy set up near Cercinitis for Parthenos and perhaps Zeus in the Mithridatic period.<sup>148</sup> Herodotus attests Taurian proximity to Cercinitis in the fifth century, while Parthenos' head appears on the city's coins in the later fourth century B.C.<sup>149</sup>

These notions at Chersonesus are entirely coherent, and seem to have been shared substantially by the Bosporans, as far as we can judge. To analyse these processes historically, however, we must look to the respective

<sup>146</sup> We hear a little of hostility between Chersonesus and Olbia, while much more is often inferred besides: further, e.g. Stolba (2011).

<sup>147</sup> Hdt. 4. 95; cf. Braund (2008b), on the tendency to disrespect by locals towards Greeks too.

<sup>148</sup> SEG 47. 1177 (after Yu. G. Vinogradov), where the restoration and interpretation are bold. Parthenos might be expected at Cercinitis: cf. perhaps SEG 33. 611; 38. 749. 18. The sanctuary at nearby Saki remains unattributable: Guldager Bilde (2009) 310–11 in detail. We may note the curative mud of the lake there, Lake Saki.

<sup>149</sup> Stolba (1990) 149; cf. Guldager Bilde (2009) 318.

situations of Taurians and Greek settlers as they began to encounter each other, whether militarily, culturally or economically. As for the Greeks, we have explained the strength of commitment to Parthenos at Chersonesus partly in terms of the Megarian-Boeotian and Heracleote traditions that came with them, entailing Iphigenia prominently and also broader allusions to a sense of a *parthenos* in the landscape of the southern Black Sea.<sup>150</sup> At the same time, however, the civic culture there and across the Crimea in the Bosporan kingdom was not simply Greek, even if the implied unity of that very ethnic label is allowed. It is clear enough that Chersonesus, and probably to an extent also the Bosporan cities, had developed together with elements of the non-Greek Crimean population, the so-called Kizil Koba culture, which seems to represent archaeologically those whom Greeks termed Taurians. We have seen that Herodotus' account of Taurian banditry and ongoing human sacrifice, completed c. 425 BC, may have had some real bearing on the Taurians of the mountains, but hardly suited the Taurians of his day who occupied the fertile lands between the mountains and the steppe that still occupies the northern portion of the Crimea. In the process of civic development prior to Herodotus, it had been the Taurian farmers of the lowlands, no doubt, who had made the major non-Greek contribution to Greek colonial success in the Crimea, reproducing Greek experience more generally around the Black Sea, such as Xenophon found at Trapezus only a little later. Since we have no reason to suppose that these lowland Taurians differed in their religion from their kinfolk of the mountains, we may reasonably infer that they too contributed to the strong commitment to Parthenos in the developing settlements that protested their Greekness.

<sup>150</sup> Thracian notions of a *parthenos* may well be relevant too, but we are poorly informed about them: Braund (2007a); cf. (2017a) on Bendis.

*Crimean Parthenos in Greece, Anatolia and  
the Mediterranean World*

In the [previous chapter](#) we saw, among much else, that the cult(s) of Parthenos in the Crimea did not correspond at all closely to the general Greek notions of Crimean Parthenos that are to be found outside the Black Sea region. While the [previous chapter](#) examined the Crimea, this chapter will focus on the various cults of the Mediterranean world (including Anatolia) which were linked in antiquity with the Crimean deity, not least by a range of local traditions. Indeed, we shall see that, often enough, these Mediterranean cults actively advertised their links to Crimean Parthenos. For this Crimean connection not only offered antiquity and importance in Greek myth on Orestes' Crimean adventures (with Pylades, Iphigenia and the much-claimed *xoanon* of the goddess herself), but also contributed substantially to the nexus of key social themes and ideas that gave these various local cults much of their meaning and purpose – namely, the incorporation of youths, friendship, social cohesion, the control and channelling of violence, hospitality and the treatment of strangers, and much more besides, all within a framework of divine will and sanction. Although details and emphases vary from case to case, the gruesome violence of the northern Black Sea (and, as a background, the larger sense of this as an Inhospitable Sea) is central to ancient conceptions about all these local cults, from Athens and Sparta to Syria and Italy. For in each instance we find human sacrifice brought from the Crimea and – crucially – transformed in, for and through local society into practice that may retain elements of barbarism, but is in fact only marginally barbaric, if barbaric at all. At the same time, the barbarism *within* these local cults and the societies in which they functioned, is thereby explained as an import from outside, driven by a divine will whose impenetrability puts an end to further enquiry. By visiting external barbarism from the Black Sea upon such 'civilised' societies, supernatural forces seemed to remove not only responsibility for internal barbarism amongst them, but even the existence of such

madness there. Instead, through these various cults, violence and potential chaos might be controlled, channelled and even transformed into civilised order.

Throughout, Crimean Parthenos and her cult-image are the origin and point of reference. However, we shall see that this is a cult (entailing practice, people and place) that has very much been left behind and apart, both by Orestes and by the local cults that claimed to have been founded by him in his flight from the Taurians. In every case these local cults show no desire for renewed contact with the Crimea. Of course, our knowledge is incomplete, but the fact remains that we hear nothing, for example, of missions in this regard to the Crimea from Italy, Greece or the eastern Mediterranean, or even of ideas about renewed linkages. Given the strong tendencies to circularity and cycles of return in Greek myth, in particular, we must observe the sharp contrast in this case. Instead of return, as we shall see in each case, there is an overwhelming tendency among these various local cults to claim possession for themselves, especially of the famous image of the Crimean goddess herself. And where we can observe contacts of any kind between these cults (beyond simple rivalry), Crimean cult is nowhere clearly involved. The reason for its omission is not far to seek. The awkward fact was that, if the reported Taurian cult (with human sacrifice to the fore) had ever had any reality, it too had been transformed, as we saw in the [previous chapter](#), not least by the Greeks of Chersonesus. In that sense, return to the Crimean homeland of the cult was impossible, even if there had been some desire to revisit the scene of theft. In the form which mattered, the original claimed by these local cults around the Mediterranean world – that is, the Taurian cult of the Crimea – had long since ceased to exist.

### **Athens: From the Taurians to Halae and Brauron**

Cult-myths and other stories told about the Taurian goddess were widespread across the Mediterranean, at least from Italy to the Levant. While the Athenian cult claims most attention, thanks to Euripides and the largely Athenocentric tendencies of modern scholarship on the Greek world, we shall see a wide array of tales across this enormous space. Their chronologies, absolute and relative, are seldom recoverable, and they embrace a range of inconsistencies, so that there was an element of competition for truth between the cults and states involved. However, they share a central theme: Orestes and Iphigenia (Pylades sometimes falls away) bring from the Crimea a *xoanon* and, with it, establish a particular cult in a distinct



location. There is much emphasis on the portability of the image, as such tales required: even Iphigenia can carry it. Still more important, however, is the notion that the image has a taste for blood and/or brings with it to the new cult a remnant of the bloody practices of the barbarian Taurians, with human sacrifice to the fore. As we shall see, this pattern of thought tends to mitigate for Greeks the barbarism of a range of customs across these cults, by locating that barbarism where, from a Greek viewpoint, it properly belongs, that is among the barbarian Taurians. And yet, what of all the savage blood-spilling in the ghastly events that had overshadowed the House of Atreus down to Orestes' arrival among the Taurians? In the various traditions we have, it is only Euripides' extended exploration of the matter in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* that explicitly brings this Greek contribution to barbarism also into consideration. In exploring these various cult traditions around the Greek world, we shall also find an enormous gulf of conception and terminology between the Taurian goddess alias Parthenos on the one hand, and the very different notion of her – e.g. as Tauropolos – cherished outside the region.

The goddess of the Taurians had a reputation for bloodiness that turned on human sacrifice, as Herodotus makes clear, underlining the point that they sacrifice Greeks. For him, her cult was therefore central to the bloody nature of Taurian society in general. However, in their bloodiness the Taurians were not particularly remarkable for Greeks when set among the other peoples around the Black Sea: we have seen how endemic Pontic savagery suited a Greek discourse of colonial improvement. In addition to the Scythian taste for mutilation and human sacrifice, there were also the Salmydessians of Thrace, who similarly preyed on the shipwrecked, and with an intent which Xenophon at least describes as motivated by economics and not religion.<sup>1</sup> There were also the Achaei, located on the north-east coast of the Black Sea beyond the Asiatic Bosphorus. They were said to have been murderous towards Greeks through their abiding rage that no Greeks came to help them after they had been blown off course into the Black Sea on the Trojan expedition.<sup>2</sup> Once again, as with Iphigenia and Achilles, we see the importance of Troy in Greek conceptions of the region, while these were wronged Greeks in search of vengeance, as might be imagined too of Iphigenia. And there were other dangerous local peoples located around the region, not only Colchians to the east,<sup>3</sup> but

<sup>1</sup> Xen. *Anab.* 7.5.13–14) with chapter 4 on *Prometheus Bound*.

<sup>2</sup> App. *Mithr.* 67; Chandrasekaran (2013).

<sup>3</sup> Above, p. 51.

also Bithynians to the south, whom Xenophon encountered not far from Heraclea Pontica.<sup>4</sup> Herodotus, as later Euripides, shows Taurians who are certainly bloodthirsty, but are no worse than others of the region, while their religious motivation (however misguided) even suggests that they are rather better than the murderous Salmydessians and others there. After all, it seems to have been agreed from archaic times onwards that it had been Artemis herself who had set Iphigenia among them and who at least tolerated the sacrifice of Greeks in her Taurian cult. However, such nuances tend to be overwhelmed and obscured in these various traditions by the dominant notion of their human sacrifice. Once again, Euripides' subtle exploration of the myth appears as much more the exception than the rule.<sup>5</sup>

For in Euripides' play the Taurians do not perform human sacrifice through brute savagery, but on the contrary consider themselves to be following the instructions of Artemis herself. Accordingly, these Taurians are not the mobs mentioned by Pseudo-Scymnus.<sup>6</sup> They are an ordered people, with a king and a *polis*. And there must be a strong sense in which these imaginary Taurians were right to suppose themselves to be carrying out Artemis' wishes, for she had not intervened to stop their sacrifices. Moreover, as the play proceeds, it emerges that their bloody behaviour is key to the process by which the goddess will attain her objective of bringing back to Greece Iphigenia, with her cult-statue, Orestes and Pylades. For the chain of events will cause the foundation of the cult at Halae Araphenides and, in part, at Brauron too.<sup>7</sup> The Taurians' sacrifice of Greeks emerges as a price that Artemis accepted, if she did not ordain it, within that larger plan.

At the same time, the myth also gave Euripides the opportunity to explore the theme of bloody barbarism among Greeks. This is exactly the phenomenon which is usually mitigated and explained away by the myth of Taurian origins for bloody cult practices among Greeks, but Euripides

<sup>4</sup> Xen. *Anab.* 6. 4 reports the awful Bithynian reputation for mistreating Greeks along the coast between Byzantium and Heraclea.

<sup>5</sup> There has been much excellent work on the play in recent years: notably Wright (2005); Hall (2012). While one might imagine the poet's invention of aetiology (albeit an ungrounded modern hypothesis), the notion that he invented the very cult(s) themselves is bizarre; cf. Seaford (2009) on all this; also Calame (2011) 16 n. 49 against the claims of e.g. Scullion (1999–2000); Kyriakou (2006). Similarly, Euripidean innovation in *Orestes* is not Euripidean invention: Wright (2006). Ekroth (2003) offers a serious search for Iphigenia at Brauron, with little to support Euripides' testimony, which itself makes no great claim for her importance there. On Greek and barbarian in Euripides, cf. also Wilkins (1990); Kennell (2006); Gibert (2011).

<sup>6</sup> Above, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> On Brauron traditions, see esp. Vernant (1991) 207–9; Goff (2004) 109.

instead highlights it in his play. For a key point in the play is Taurian King Thoas' response to the story of events in the house of Atreus, specifically Orestes' matricide. 'By Apollo, even among barbarians no one would dare to do that!' observes the shocked monarch (*IT* 1174). As Euripides develops the plot, Orestes' pollution is of the first importance, because this is the reason that Iphigenia can give for removing the *xoanon* to the seashore supposedly in order to cleanse it, but in fact to facilitate its theft. In that way the pollution of Orestes is brought to the centre of the story once more: the audience is reminded that it is the need to cleanse this pollution that has brought Orestes to the Crimea in the first place, sent by Apollo himself, here invoked by Thoas.<sup>8</sup>

There is a grim humour in Thoas' remark, and perhaps some misplaced smugness in the audience about the apparent Greek ability to deceive the barbarian. However, there is also a profoundly serious reflection here upon where barbarism lies, and the ways in which Greeks may be as much or more barbarian in their behaviour than actual barbarians, who are simply non-Greeks. Later, at Rome, Seneca used much the same Taurian trope: of course, he was no stranger to the plays of Euripides.<sup>9</sup> With Thoas' exclamation, Euripides highlighted what the audience knew to be right: Athenian tragedy and Greek drama at large was replete with barbarous slaughter and gore, most of which was the work not of barbarians but of Greeks.<sup>10</sup> The pious Taurian king is only more barbarian than many in the house of Atreus (for example) by virtue of his ethnicity, not his behaviour. And, despite the fact that he accepts human sacrifice, he does not appear in the play as more generally barbarous or bloody in his conduct or personal or societal ethics. As in Herodotus, so more clearly in Euripides, the Taurians sacrifice Greeks through their commitment to religion, so their worse fault may not be the sacrifice itself so much as that extreme religious commitment.

Accordingly, Euripides' Thoas abandons his pursuit of the fugitives when he hears that such is the will of the gods: that was consistent with his piety. However, that was not the way it always went, for there were other versions of the tale, as we have begun to see, in which Thoas maintained his pursuit. While the king's name has often been taken to suggest swift-footed Achilles (not wrongly), we should be clear that it also has a rather broader evocation. In Euripides' play, the king would have caught the fugitives if

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Bremmer (2013). The need to cleanse on account of Orestes was familiar at Athens through the Choes festival: Eur. *IT*; Phanodemus, *FGH* 325 F 11; Hamilton (1992). Possibly Iphigenia's ruse was reflected in ritual at Halae: see Bonnechere (1994) 51 n. 152 on the corrupt schol. *Hom. Iliad*, 6. 136.

<sup>9</sup> Even the 'inhospitable Taurian' does not commit incest: Sen. *Phaedra*, 168; cf. Smith (2011).

<sup>10</sup> On that dramatic gore, see Henrichs (2000).

Athena had not intervened to settle matters. While the audience might enjoy the notion of an easily outwitted barbarian, it is not at all clear that Thoas had really been outwitted. The denouement demonstrates that he had no cause to fear theft and flight because he could call upon his ships and Poseidon to put a stop to any such attempt. Piety had its benefits. Importantly his name evokes not only Achilles, but Ares too and other epic warriors, for whom speed was a substantial part of their craft.<sup>11</sup>

In all this, however, we must be clear that any Euripidean debt to Herodotus is negligible, at most, even though such a debt is now commonly asserted, or reference is made to some common source.<sup>12</sup> Herodotus shows, as we have seen, that there was a plurality of accounts of the Taurians, and specifically of their sacrificial practices, which were of course their principal interest for Greeks of the Mediterranean. For them it was the Iphigenia story that made Taurians interesting and established human sacrifice (of, by or to Iphigenia, or Orestes and Pylades) as the key feature of Taurian society. That is the issue for both Herodotus and Euripides, certainly, but there is little else that they have in common, and in most matters their accounts are either different or do not connect. It may well be true that Euripides knew his Herodotus, and may even have known the author personally, but his engagement with Taurians seems not to have been affected by any such knowledge, despite modern claims to the contrary.

In his play Euripides explores with his Athenian audience a set of universal issues within human society, most importantly the themes of barbarism, piety, family and above all friendship, and more specifically friendship between young men under pressure.<sup>13</sup> Orestes and Pylades, and the remarkable bond between them, exemplify the best behaviour of young men, not least by showing the bond upon which the city will depend in times of war, an abiding probability if not a present reality. Each young man wishes to die in place of his friend: fine *peripoloi* like these would form a band of brothers upon whom the community could depend for its protection.<sup>14</sup> In that manner the play exemplifies the informing ideology of the ephebeia in its various forms across the Greek world.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See Gow and Page (1968) 92. 3 on the 'swift Ionians' with excellent comment ad loc.

<sup>12</sup> Recently, e.g. Leigh (2010) 137–8 making too much of Herodotus' mention of a version of Taurian sacrifice entailing a cliff, and his mention of impalement (of heads, not bodies), while ignoring the various differences, e.g. use of a club not a sword for sacrifice: further, Braund (2005a).

<sup>13</sup> On these themes, see Lefteratou (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Bonnechere (1998) enlarges on communal aspects of such myth and ritual.

<sup>15</sup> On the subsequent development of the institution, with pertinent bibliography, see Fröhlich and Hamon (2013).

It was probably that key theme in particular which made this play so popular through antiquity, for it remained an issue of the most profound significance both collectively from community to community, and individually in the lives of those involved. The bond between Orestes and Pylades exemplified an ethical conduct that continued to be highly prized.<sup>16</sup> The play's demonstration that friendship was more important than death, which might even be overcome through friendship, as in the play, made this a fitting theme for the decoration of sarcophagi, for example.<sup>17</sup>

Lucian's use of the play is especially insightful, for he uses it precisely to drive a discussion (between a Scythian of the Roman period named Toxaris and a Greek, Mnesippus) of two themes that come together in Euripides' play, namely friendship and the comparison of Greek and non-Greek societies. In that way Lucian not only calls attention to these themes within Euripides' play, but also hints at the larger philosophical concern with friendship as a formative and defining phenomenon within all human society. As usual with Lucian, all this is explored with a playful manner, which does not undermine the seriousness of its content. For Lucian has the speakers agree at the outset that the Scythians now sacrifice to Orestes and Pylades, as models of the key virtue of friendship for the young. Scythian Toxaris sets this out at length:

Now, now, Mnesippus, listen to me, and you shall see how much more candid we barbarians are in our valuation of good men than you Greeks. In Argos and Mycenae there is not so much as a respectable tomb raised to Orestes and Pylades: in Scythia, they have their temple, which is very appropriately dedicated to the two friends in common, their sacrifices, and every honour. The fact of their being foreigners does not prevent us from recognising their virtues.<sup>18</sup> We do not inquire into the nationality of noble souls: we can hear without envy of the illustrious deeds of our enemies; we do justice to their merits, and count them Scythians in deed if not in name. What particularly excites our reverent admiration in the present case is the unparalleled loyalty of the two friends; in them we have a model from which every man may learn how he must share good and evil fortune with his friends, if he would enjoy the esteem of all good Scythians. The sufferings they endured with and for one another our ancestors recorded on a brazen pillar in the Oresteum; and they made it law, that the education of their children should begin with committing to memory all that is inscribed thereon. More easily shall a child

<sup>16</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia* 24; Val. Max. 4. 7 *init.*

<sup>17</sup> Hall (2012).

<sup>18</sup> On that theme, see Visser (1982) esp. 425.

forget his own father's name than be at fault in the achievements of Orestes and Pylades. Again, in the temple corridor are pictures by the artists of old, illustrating the story set forth on the pillar. Orestes is first shown on ship-board, with his friend at his side. Next, the ship has gone to pieces on the rocks; Orestes is captured and bound; already Iphigenia prepares the two victims for sacrifice. But on the opposite wall we see that Orestes has broken free; he slays Thoas and many a Scythian; and the last scene shows them sailing away, with Iphigenia and the Goddess; the Scythians clutch vainly at the receding vessel; they cling to the rudder, they strive to clamber on board; at last, utterly baffled, they swim back to the shore, wounded or terrified. It is at this point in their conflict with the Scythians that the devotion of the friends is best illustrated: the painter makes each of them disregard his own enemies, and ward off his friend's assailants, seeking to intercept the arrows before they can reach him, and counting lightly of death, if he can save his friend, and receive in his own person the wounds that are meant for the other. Such devotion, such loyal and loving partnership in danger, such true and steadfast affection, we held to be more than human; it indicated a spirit not to be found in common men. While the gale is prosperous, we all take it very much amiss if our friends will not share equally with us: but let the wind shift ever so little, and we leave them to weather the storm by themselves. I must tell you that in Scythia no quality is more highly esteemed than this of friendship; there is nothing on which a Scythian prides himself so much as on sharing the toils and dangers of his friend; just as nothing is a greater reproach among us than treachery to a friend. We honour Orestes and Pylades, then, because they excelled in the Scythian virtue of loyalty, which we place above all others; and it is for this that we have bestowed on them the name of Coraci, which in our language means spirits of friendship. (Lucian, *Toxaris* 5–6)

Immediately we observe that this is not the story of Euripides' play, which once again reminds us of the wealth of traditions current in antiquity. Here the friends kill Thoas and force their escape: there is no sign even of a ruse by Iphigenia. However, the themes are very much the same. Whereas in Euripides' play Thoas might be a Greek in his conduct, so Toxaris insists that ethnicity is not the main issue: Orestes and Pylades might be Greeks ethnically, but Scythians regard them as Scythian through their conduct, he claims. And their role in the training of Greek youths here recurs, only set among the youth of Scythia. As is the way with Lucian, there is an abundance of cleverness at work. However, we can see that cleverness working with the themes that we have already drawn out for ourselves in Euripides' play. Such were the key themes of the story of Orestes and Pylades, and indeed Iphigenia, across all the versions we know.

Alongside these universal issues, however, Euripides' play deals also with matters of particular concern to his primary audience of Athenians. The

backdrop of the Peloponnesian War made the bonds of the military all the more vital a concern: the play is usually dated to the period of the Sicilian expedition and its traumatic aftermath for Athens, when the sea-route past Halae was of sudden new importance.<sup>19</sup> And of course the play also presents a set of aetiologies, which are not only about distant Taurians (explaining their human sacrifices), but more importantly for the Athenian audience about major rituals in Athenian society, with regard to young men and women, for whom Orestes and Pylades on the one hand and, rather differently, Iphigenia on the other function as precursors and role models. The fact that the play concludes with Athena herself, the goddess of Athens *par excellence*, foretelling the creation of cult and ritual for youths (with the Taurian statue in pride of place) at Halae Araphenides and also Iphigenia's cult for women at Brauron, makes it incontrovertibly obvious that a significant function of the play was the exploration of that aetiology.<sup>20</sup>

For young men, the key ritual is the use of a sword to draw blood from the neck. This is explained as a commuted form of sacrifice, recompensing the deity for the sacrifice that was left incomplete in the Crimea. There has been substantial debate for many years about the extent of Euripidean invention in this aetiology, if any. The weakness of the aetiology for the cult name Tauropolos has not inspired confidence, since scholars have sometimes found it hard to believe that Athenians might have believed such an aetiology, though one is often struck by the general weakness of such aetiological etymologising in antiquity, within which this example hardly stands out.<sup>21</sup> Modern ignorance of Taurians and the Black Sea region has also encouraged the notion that Athenians would have found them odd or exotic, despite the Athenian imperial activities in the region and the flurry of Pontic names that occur on the Athenian stage, and despite the story of Iphigenia among Taurians in the *Cypria* and the evidence of Herodotus that the theme was much discussed.<sup>22</sup> There is also regular reference among sceptics to the lack of earlier mention of the ritual. However, the argument from silence is unworkable, because we know almost nothing (as we shall see) about most of the cult rituals concerning this deity around the Mediterranean world and also little about many a ritual at Athens in general, particularly before the fourth century B.C.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Braund (2007a).

<sup>20</sup> Further, Seaford (2009) conclusively *contra* Scullion (1999–2000).

<sup>21</sup> There are more linked with this myth, below, while the significance of Taurians as bulls may be important here.

<sup>22</sup> Braund (2005a).

<sup>23</sup> Menander's *Epitrepontes* has other concerns, while fourth-century epigraphy sheds little light: Bathrellou (2012).



Meanwhile, we do have the teasing fragments of Sophocles' *Scythians* (fr. 546–52) which mention shipwreck, rugged coastal terrain and things associated with Achilles. Those are features shared with the *IT*, though of course we cannot know how they were deployed by Sophocles. The fact that his *Scythians* also mentioned Medea and Apsyrtus has led to the view that this was another play about the Argonauts, perhaps on their return.<sup>24</sup> But the inference is unsafe. We should note that the pair are mentioned specifically with regard to their brother–sister relationship (as half-siblings in this version, by different mothers). In principle, that too would be at home in a play like *IT*, with its strong emphasis on the sibling relationships of Apollo-Artemis and Iphigenia-Orestes.<sup>25</sup> Where Medea kills her half-brother, Iphigenia does not kill her full brother. Indeed, a play about Orestes, Iphigenia and Pylades in the Crimea would also suit its title (and presumably chorus) rather better than an Argonautic tale. However, we do not have a date for the play, which need not be earlier than Euripides', if close dating is considered significant. The larger issue here is that, although we may be sure enough that Euripides' play interacts with other versions of the myth (in ritual as well as in drama at Athens), we are in no position to elucidate these interactions for the most part.<sup>26</sup>

However, it is generally agreed that *Ajax* is among Sophocles' earlier plays (c. 450–430 BC), and there we find both explicit mention of Tauropolos and what might be a link to the paltry fragments of *Scythians*. As to the latter, we find three times in *Ajax* reference to things of Achilles which are specified, namely his arms. Were these the things of *Scythians*?<sup>27</sup> It is at least an interesting coincidence that it is also in *Ajax* that we find the only allusion to Tauropolos in Athenian tragedy outside *IT* (*Ajax* 172–8). Jebb and others long since wondered whether there was something of the Taurian myth in Sophocles' mention of Tauropolian Artemis as the possible source of the madness that caused Ajax to slaughter his cattle, while it was also noted that the epithet suited the victims particularly well.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, the focus of this choral passage in *Ajax* is on madness and its cause, so that we may well suspect that the Taurian tale was relevant, for madness entailing bloodletting was at the very centre of that myth, not only at Halae, but also at Sparta, in Syria, Asia Minor and elsewhere, as we shall see. We may tentatively conclude that Sophocles shows some

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Lloyd-Jones (1996) 276–7.

<sup>25</sup> Further, beyond the play, see Wallensten (2011).

<sup>26</sup> Torrance (2013) shows the (esp. literary) complexities at work.

<sup>27</sup> *Ajax* 41, 1239, 1337: the only examples of the word otherwise in Sophocles.

<sup>28</sup> Jebb (1896) ad loc. and 222–3, with earlier bibliography.



awareness of that tradition in *Ajax* and probably in *Scythians* too, although neither in the former or the few fragments of the latter is there any explicit discussion of course of the Taurian aspect of the story that we can trace in the *Cypria*. More generally, all these considerations – for all the uncertainties – highlight the particular hazards of attempts to exclude Taurians from the Athenian dramatic tradition before Euripides' *IT*. Our loss of most of that drama undermines all such arguments from silence, especially when we know of plays that might very well have accommodated Taurians, as most obviously the tragedies named *Iphigenia* that were composed both by Aeschylus and by Sophocles.<sup>29</sup>

Archaeology at Loutsia contributes much more, confirming the cult there in outline from the second millennium BC, and giving hints of its activities through the various dedications and other items discovered there. However, there was never a concerted excavation: spasmodic attempts over more than a century have combined with poor publication of results to leave our sense of the place in a very unsatisfactory state. We can see, for example, what looks like reconstruction around the early fifth century or so, but interpretation is at best provisional. For example, it may well be a response to damage in the Persian Wars, rather than any major change in cult there. Some krateriskoi from the site help to confirm the cult of Artemis and the link to Brauron, only some six kilometres away. That is valuable, but one could wish for much more.<sup>30</sup> The fact that the Taurians are attested much earlier than any innovation c. 500 BC undercuts arguments that the Halae ritual is older than the aetiological myth given by Euripides.<sup>31</sup>

Ultimately, the extent of Euripides' creativity is a question of competing probabilities. The result, however, seems very clear. While many prefer to suppose that he created the Taurian link and even the ritual at Halae, it is clear enough that the link between Artemis, Iphigenia and the Taurians was already in place before his play and quite possibly there in Athenian tragedy too. Moreover, the Athenian audience had generations of experience of the cult at Halae, so it is surely hard to imagine that Euripides presented his fellow Athenians with a whole concoction about Taurians, Tauropolos and the ritual at Halae which was substantially new to them. On the contrary, in addition to the explicit aetiology, there is reason to

<sup>29</sup> Further, e.g. Sommerstein (2008) 107.

<sup>30</sup> Hollinshead (1983); Kalogeropoulos (2010); Bathrellou (2012); cf. Bonnechere (1994) 48–52. For heroic efforts to reconstruct the archaeology, Kalogeropoulos (2013).

<sup>31</sup> On myth, ritual and primacy, Graf (1979) offers balanced reflection.

suspect that Euripides alludes to aspects of the cult at Halae which he does not set out in any detail, relying on his audience's knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

If the aetiology were substantially Euripidean invention, we would have to suppose that the climactic resolution of the play was a major puzzle or shock to the audience, which was suddenly faced with the notion that their cult was rooted among distant barbarians. But to what purpose? It seems on balance much more likely that Euripides' creativity showed itself not in the plot of the play, nor in its aetiology, but in the detailed course of events, interactions and discussions that made up the body of the work. It was here that he tackled the great themes of friendship, ethnicity, piety and more.

Since the cult at Halae had been functioning for around a century before the play, there had been ample time for the development of aetiology, and the Black Sea region was familiar enough, even if distant and rather forbidding, especially after the archaic adventures of Miltiades in the Thracian Chersonese and subsequently Pericles' expedition there c. 437 and consequent Athenian settlement on the south coast, all of which had required debate in the assembly. That was well before Euripides put his play on stage.<sup>33</sup> Particularly interesting in that regard is an Athenian vase of c. 500 BC, produced around the time when the cult at Halae may have been undergoing some change, but before the construction work there after the Persian Wars. The vase shows young men dressed after the fashion of Scythian, or indeed Taurian, warriors around an altar from which sprouts a large palm-tree, the symbol of Artemis.<sup>34</sup> One such vase-image cannot be decisive, but it certainly points to the same conclusion as the foregoing considerations. In short, there seems no particular reason to suppose that the Taurian connection and the ritual were Euripides' creation, while there is a variety of reasons to think that these had already formed part of the cult tradition at Halae, around whose origins Euripides developed his work. Meanwhile, we must also reckon with the fact that this set of Athenian ideas accords very well with similar strategies which we shall find repeated across the Mediterranean world, where the impact of Euripides'

<sup>32</sup> Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis* 173–80 alludes to the 'Scythian' rite as also Taurian, and proceeds on the theme of cattle. Euripides' *boukoloi* in *IT* may allude to a group of the cult; cf. the thiasos of 'bulls' later at Bizone, near Dionysopolis, among whom the name Skythes is unusually prominent: IGBulg. I<sup>3</sup> 6; cf. the Taureastai of Poseidon at Istros (ISM I. 60 and 61; cf. 57), a deity also entailed at coastal Halae, across from Carystus: *IT* 1444–5, 1450–1; cf. 1414–19; Cropp (2000) 261; Braund (2005a). Tzanetou (1999–2000) argues that the Athenian audience will have found the *Arkteia* in the play too.

<sup>33</sup> Further, Braund (2005a).

<sup>34</sup> See p. 78 with the 'Scythian' ephebes attested at Elis and further vases.

play was evidently marginal. The claim that the bloody rituals of Greeks had been brought from the Scythians or Taurians will recur far and wide in accounts which are certainly later than Euripides, but which seldom show much debt to his work.

Meanwhile, the Athenian explanation of the Halae ritual as an import from the Taurian world relieved the otherwise significant concern that it shed the blood of the community's youths. There was something barbaric about that, which the aetiology duly acknowledged and assuaged. The etymology of Tauropolos in terms of Taurians and *peripoloi* was not simply a matter of exoticism and wordplay, but was part of this broader narrative of youths under test, who faced imminent sacrifice without flinching or disloyalty to their fellows. They would go on to become valuable citizens and warriors together for the community. The bloodiness of the rite repeats the test on the model of Orestes and Pylades. Artemis herself presides appearing as the blood-habituated *xoanon* that the youths themselves had brought from among the Taurians, where it had almost had their blood too. In Attica, as Euripides' play has it, the rite at Halae offered a measure of compensation for the sacrifice that had never quite happened among the Taurians.<sup>35</sup> And in compensating in blood for the youths of myth, the real Athenian youth was very much a new Orestes or Pylades.<sup>36</sup>

## Sparta

In much the same way Pausanias explains the bloodletting ritual that occurred elsewhere in Greece within a different cult of Artemis.<sup>37</sup> This is not Tauropolos, but Orthia. For, at least by Pausanias' day, Spartans also claimed to have the *xoanon* brought by Orestes and Iphigenia from the Taurians. Again (rather as at Halae) the image is said to have retained the taste for human blood that it had developed in receipt of human sacrifice among the Taurians.<sup>38</sup> And indeed, Pausanias supports the Spartan claim against the Athenians, while also acknowledging the claims of other communities across Asia Minor and the Near East. We know that the form of the ritual at Sparta changed across the centuries and had become rather a tourist-attraction by Pausanias' day.<sup>39</sup> However, it is also clear enough that

<sup>35</sup> *IT* 1459–61 with Cropp (2000) ad loc., rightly rejecting the notion that the ritual itself is somehow Euripidean invention.

<sup>36</sup> And more besides: see below p. 78.

<sup>37</sup> Paus. 3. 16. 7–11, where the lack of Euripidean influence is very clear: the Athenian claim is rejected, while Halae is not even mentioned. See esp. Bonnechere (1993); (1994) 52–5.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Des Bouvrie (2009).

<sup>39</sup> See Hodkinson (2000) esp. 202–4; cf. Kennell (1995).

the rite there had always entailed bloodletting among youths under test, on the same broad pattern as in Attica, albeit substantially different in detail. We are told that there was special preparation for the ordeal, a process expressively known as *fouaxir*, or 'fox-time',<sup>40</sup> and it was said that many young men died from the flogging they received (Plut. *Lycurgus* 18. 1). It hardly mattered whether these tales were true: such barbarism required a rationale.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, the kind of explanation offered by Pausanias is also much the same as that given by Euripides. The *xoanon* is the cause of these bloody practices, which therefore emerge as a foreign import that is not wholly Spartan or Greek. That view had particular force at Sparta, where discomfort about foreign influence coincided with a large question about whether Spartans were themselves somehow barbarians.<sup>42</sup> It was that sense of Spartan barbarism that gave credence to the story that Spartan kings kept the skin of Pherecydes, for example.<sup>43</sup>

Pausanias is not only aware of the fact that the rite in Sparta had changed over time, but actually offers a whole narrative of the history of bloodletting inside the Spartan community, within which the *xoanon* has been the recurrent source of a mad blood-lust. It was that blood-lust, says Pausanias, that had been channelled into human sacrifice there. And that had in turn been transformed into the bloodletting ritual that he reports. He further reports that the central concern of the statue for blood is physically illustrated in the course of the rite, in his day at least, by the presence of a priestess bearing it at the performance of the ritual. We have observed already that portability was a key feature of the image, wooden and by no means full-size. Pausanias explains that the statue grows heavy when insufficient blood is spilled. Evidently, the priestess' bearing of the *xoanon* both expressed and controlled the amount of blood drawn from the youths by the lashing they received. 'So the image ever since the sacrifices in the Taurian land keeps its fondness for human blood', concludes Pausanias, who notably retains Taurians, while others of his day had Scythians (like Lucian, above), despite the absence here of Tauropolos.<sup>44</sup> A particularly interesting contemporary voice is Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonius of*

<sup>40</sup> On *phouaxir*, Hesychius *s.v.* φοῦαξιρ; Kennell (1995) 71–4; cf. Ducat (2006).

<sup>41</sup> Lucian, again, can use it to explore Greek forms of barbarism: *Anacharsis* 38.

<sup>42</sup> In general, Hodkinson (2000); Cartledge (2003); Kennell (2010). Cf. the Spartan claim that Scythians were responsible for Cleomenes' suicide: Hdt. 6. 84; also Philost *Letters* 1. 5; *VA* 6. 20.

<sup>43</sup> Plut. *Pelopidas* 21. 3; cf. Bremmer (1993).

<sup>44</sup> Paus. 3. 16. 11 (cf. 1. 43. 1) distinguishing Taurians and Scythians, where he mentions also a tradition that the image was found among willows, without offering a link between that and the Orestes story. On such finds, see Graf (2004) and below.



Figure 6 Dedication to Artemis Orthia from Sparta. © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

*Tyana*, where the human blood of the ritual raises debate about the boundaries between (Scythian) barbarism and Greek civilisation. Philostratus' Apollonius insists (against the suggestion that this shedding of human blood is out of place in Greek culture) upon the (Greek) civilising of barbarism that can be seen in the change from the barbarian sacrifice of strangers by these 'Scythians' to the relatively mild bloodshed of the Spartan version, where it is not strangers but the Spartan elite that is 'sacrificed' to

the goddess. In that way the barbaric ritual in Greece is made to exemplify Greek civilising of barbarism, all within the framework of what seems to be divine ordinance.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, we must also observe that Pausanias seems to have found this line of explanation entirely plausible. It is important too that we have a fair idea of the form of the cult-statue held by the priestess. For excavations at Orthia's sanctuary revealed a series of bone and terracotta statuettes which have been taken to reproduce this cult-image in miniature.<sup>46</sup> These miniatures seem strikingly non-Greek in their appearance.<sup>47</sup> While they evoke the Near East for us, it may well be that in ancient Sparta this evident foreignness was interpreted in terms of an origin among the distant Taurians. If, as seems most likely, this was indeed the form of the cult-image itself, it would follow that the strikingly alien form of the goddess seemed to confirm the Taurian tale, while perhaps explaining not only that tale but also competing claims among peoples and cults of the east. At the same time, the columnar rigidity of the image, we may note, was well suited to portability and to the priestess' task of holding it during the ritual, presumably clutched close to her body. This was indeed a goddess imagined as Upright (literally, *Orthia*), rather as also was her counterpart of Ephesus, to be considered in the [next chapter](#).<sup>48</sup> And while we can understand how it seemed to come from afar, there is no difficulty either understanding why those who looked upon this strange image also found it disturbing, even without the ritual bloodshed that provided its particular context at Sparta.

Both in Attica and in Sparta these bloody rites have young men as their focus. Young women were, of course, also involved, but they did not have their blood spilled in these rites any more than did Iphigenia among the Taurians. For, as we saw explicitly enough at Halae, there is a strong sense in which these young men are avatars of Orestes, individually and in a social context prefigured by Orestes' relationship with Pylades. Female activities are described rather in terms of dances, song and performance,<sup>49</sup> while the priestess who presided at the rites of Orthia resembles Iphigenia in that she carried the statue and presided over the bloodletting. Possibly Artemis had a priestess in such a role at Halae too, but Euripides leaves the matter unclear: his audience knew full well what happened there and needed little

<sup>45</sup> Philost. *VA* 6. 20 reflecting too on the famous Spartan hostility to strangers. Cf. Elsner (2007) 40–1.

<sup>46</sup> Dawkins (1929) 145–7, 218–21. On the bone objects, see too Marangou (1969).

<sup>47</sup> Vernant (1991) 208 notes how a *xoanon* tends to look alien.

<sup>48</sup> On the great tangle of uncertainties around Orthia, see further Waugh (2012).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Ingalls (2000).

detail. Women spilled blood not so much in war (or aberrant murder), but in reproduction, where they too might find death. Accordingly, Euripides' Athena foretells how Iphigenia will receive offerings of bloody rags that have come from women who have died in childbirth. Iphigenia had seen a lot of blood among the Taurians, which made her particularly appropriate. However, no barbarian origin was required for these female rituals, because they had nothing barbarous about them that needed to be explained.

It is unclear how far such rituals were entailed elsewhere around the Greek world in other cults of Artemis. It is not necessary to assume that other examples of Tauropolos' cult involved the same ritual that was practised at Halae, but they may have done. It is unfortunate that we do not have the works of the historian honoured at Amphipolis in the third century BC for his historical activities, which included an account of its civic protectress, Tauropolos. It is especially interesting to see the historian (evidently not an Amphipolitan), concerned with the education of the young, though we are not told that his educational activities had any particular link to the goddess or her cult there.<sup>50</sup> Unclear also is the number of these other cults which claimed in some sense to possess the blood-habituated *xoanon* or some version of it, an *aphidruma*.<sup>51</sup> However, we should probably seek to understand Tauropolos at Amphipolis both in terms of influence across the Aegean and with regard to more local religious concerns. The key role of Athens in the history of the city's development demands reflection on the possible role of the Athenian Tauropolia there, so that the cult and ritual at Halae may well have been reproduced in some form also here on the Strymon.<sup>52</sup> It is at least an interesting coincidence that it was at Amphipolis (then Nine Ways, Ennea Hodoi) that Xerxes chose to sacrifice boys (*paidēs*) and girls (*parthenoi*) as he took his invading forces into Greece, apparently with a view to local religion.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, the local religious environment included a Parthenos near the Strymon delta at Oisyme (Nea Peramos) and, close to its east along the coast, at Neapolis (modern Kavala): she may well have been linked to the Tauropolia at Amphipolis. The remains at Neapolis of a fine classical temple towards the sea on the acropolis (there, with sculpture, inscriptions and dedications),

<sup>50</sup> *Bull.Ép.* (1979) no. 271; Chaniotis (1988) 299 reasonably suggests that Tauropolos' epiphanies were prominent in his account. Like Syrisus' at Chersonesus, his work covered both the goddess' activities and civic history more generally, in which no doubt she figured prominently.

<sup>51</sup> See further, p. 130.

<sup>52</sup> Compare e.g. the Brauron votive with the bull-ranging female on Amphipolitan coinage: n. 112 in this chapter.

<sup>53</sup> Hdt. 7. 114, well before Athenians founded Amphipolis there.



make it clear enough that Parthenos was of the first importance in this community.<sup>54</sup> We can only speculate how this local Parthenos may have been linked with the Taurian deity. No doubt, however, these were matters which the historian of Tauropolos at Amphipolis had set out in his history, evidently to considerable local satisfaction.<sup>55</sup>

Of special interest in that regard is the cult of Artemis at Elis, situated hard by the gymnasium. Photius states that the ephebes there were called ‘Scythians’, which encourages the suspicion that in Elis too the cult of Artemis was linked to the Crimea, and not least with regard to the young men there.<sup>56</sup> An obscure passage in the so-called *Confession of St Cyprian* seems to link Elis with the Spartan cult of Orthia, calling it Tauropolos: taken with our other hints, that further strengthens the case for a Crimean connection at Elis.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, we should probably suppose local traditions of a Taurian/Scythian connection in many other places besides, as at Amphipolis, for example, potentially wherever a cult of Artemis existed.<sup>58</sup> That would certainly help to explain why the personal name Skythes is so widespread.

While it is not hard to appreciate in a general sense how such youths, temporarily roving outside the community and its rules perhaps,<sup>59</sup> might be imagined as akin to Scythians,<sup>60</sup> we have seen enough of the association between Artemis, young men and Scythia to raise the suspicion that in Elis too there was some rite of bloodletting traced to Scythia, whether flogging, the use of a sword or something else. Moreover, a small group of Athenian vase-images seem to bring together ephebes and Scythians in art, showing young warriors dressed in Scythian caps and with non-hoplite equipment as they engage in some military skulduggery, such as an ambush. These recall the ‘Scythians’ of Elis, but in a firmly Athenian

<sup>54</sup> Damaskos (2013).

<sup>55</sup> On the cult, further Mari (2012).

<sup>56</sup> Photius, *Lexicon*, s.v. Συνέφηβος. He also notes that those at Sparta were called *Sideunai*, which has not been explained. His subsequent remark on the separation of boys as a group at the age of 15–16 for their maturation may refer to Elis, Sparta or both. Cf. Porter (2003) 147–8 on teenage Orestes; also Davidson (2007).

<sup>57</sup> It reads: ‘I came also to Elis and came to know Artemis Tauropolos in Lacedaemon in order to learn the blending and dividing of matter and the lifting up of oblique and savage narratives’ (tr. Nilsson (1947) 169). There is no explicit link between Elis and Tauropolos, but without such a link the mention of Elis is odd. Nilsson thought of the Olympic Games, but these are not mentioned. If Elis were known for Tauric rites, as Photius’ ‘Scythians’ might suggest, its inclusion in this text of the fourth (?) century AD would be more rational.

<sup>58</sup> See LIMC s.v. Parthenos. Pausanias’ list of claimants is not exhaustive, as we shall see.

<sup>59</sup> E.g. Hodkinson (2000) 202–4 on their thieving. In general, Ducat (2006).

<sup>60</sup> As argued by Hartog (1988) 55.



cultural milieu. It is all the more interesting to note that one of these images, on a vase from Heidelberg, features also a palm-tree rising from an altar among the crouching 'Scythians'. This is very much the symbol of Artemis, whose association with 'Scythians' and Scythians/Taurians we have explored. Taken together, these details and the Euripidean aetiology raise the distinct possibility that the youths at Halae too were 'Scythians'.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, we may observe a curious detail in Euripides' play that bears on Sparta. For there the handmaidens of Iphigenia seem all to be Spartan, insofar as they pine for the Eurotas.<sup>62</sup> Given claims to her brother Orestes by Athenians and Spartans alike, we can only wonder how far the two traditions concerning Tauropolos at Halae and Orthia in Sparta had become entwined before Euripides. Throughout, we are faced with a nexus of actual cult-practices, cult-related aetiological traditions and the energetic activities of mythographers of various kinds, who seem to have been responsible for some of the more garish fictions on our theme. A probable case in point is the claim that Phocaeans burnt a man alive as an offering to Tauropolos, a very useful tale for a militant Christian like Clement of Alexandria, who duly repeats it as fact.<sup>63</sup>

## Syria

Pausanias alludes (3. 16. 8) to a tradition that the *xoanon* came to Laodicea in Syria, not brought by Orestes and his party, but conferred by Seleucus Nicator, its founder, who named the city after his mother, Laodice. On this account, the Persians had looted it from Attica (oddly, from Brauron)<sup>64</sup> and taken it to Susa, whence Seleucus had passed it to Syrian Laodicea. Kings could have large statues moved easily enough,<sup>65</sup> but even so here again the portability of the image is indicated. At Laodicea there was evidently great pride in the image, as is indicated: the city displayed it on its coins.<sup>66</sup> Its ferocity is worth noting.

<sup>61</sup> Lissarrague (1989) 41–3, esp. on ARV<sup>2</sup> 156.54 (Painter of Berlin 2268) c. 500 BC; in general, also Lissarrague (1990).

<sup>62</sup> Hall (1987).

<sup>63</sup> Clem. Alex. *Protrepticus*, 3. 42. 6, citing Pythocles of Samos: further, Cameron (2004) 49. Hughes (1991) 121 suggests that this may be a myth about replacing humans with animals, like the wild creatures burnt alive for Artemis at Patrae: Paus. 7. 18. 11–13) with Bonnechere (1994) 55–61; Robertson (2010) 326 on human sacrifice there.

<sup>64</sup> On stories there, Robertson (2010) 339–41.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. the statue brought allegedly from Sinope by Philadelphus: p. 160.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. SHA *Elagabalus* 7. 5–7.

However, we may wonder whether there were stories told in Laodicea of a different kind, involving Orestes himself. There is a late tradition that a maiden was sacrificed annually there, but was replaced with a deer: the recipient is said to have been Athena, but the deer might suggest rather Artemis.<sup>67</sup> Finally, in the sixth century AD, John Malalas of Antioch-on-the-Orontes makes the point explicit for us. Indeed, Malalas not only has Syria specified in the Delphic oracle on Orestes' cure, but also inserts a Laodice into the family of Agamemnon. Without discussion, he simply asserts that she was a sister of Orestes, Iphigenia and Chrysothemis.<sup>68</sup> Evidently, Laodicea claimed more for its link to the Taurian statue of its coins than simply its presentation by Seleucus. Pausanias has given only part of the story on the *xoanon* in Syria. Further, insofar as Laodicea was the port for Syrian Apamea, we must observe a Scythian there in association with Apollo: this is the Scythian who skinned Marsyas for his divine master, a scene presented at Apamea in a fine bronze group.<sup>69</sup> And Malalas further expounds on the importance of Orestes and his party at Antioch, where he finally obtained a cure (our Antiochene alleges) at a temple on nearby Mt. Amanus.<sup>70</sup> Evidently too, they were important at Seleucia Pieria, where Malalas includes their passing in this same narrative of their Syrian escapades. We have here glimpses of a much broader tendency in Roman Syria to a local Hellenic patriotism that flourished across the empire: while Aristophanes could be claimed as a Naucraticite, Homer himself was a target for Syrian Gadara.<sup>71</sup>

These four communities of northern Syria, the so-called Syrian tetrapolis (Antioch, Seleucia, Apamea and Laodicea) evidently constituted a cultural group in which the arrival and activities of Orestes and his party from the Crimea played a significant role, not least in binding the group together. While we lack details, the ferocious look of the image on the coins of Laodicea, together with the Scythian skinner at Apamea, suggests another example of bloodiness.

Down the coast at Scythopolis in Palestine, Iphigenia had herself sacrificed a virgin girl, according to Malalas. For Orestes had proceeded

<sup>67</sup> Porphyry, *On abstinence* 2. 56 (third century AD): Frazer, on Paus. 3. 16. 8 fairly observes that her roots may be more a local deity, suggesting Astarte herself. Porphyry was a native of nearby Tyre.

<sup>68</sup> *Chron.* 5. 34, apparently after the crepuscular *Domninos* of the fourth–fifth century AD: further, Jeffreys (1990) esp. 178–9, 203–5. Further, Graf (2015).

<sup>69</sup> Only an inscription has survived: *Ann. Ép* (1976), no. 678. Malalas refers to other statues too, which record the cure of Orestes and the sacrifice of Nyssa: see below.

<sup>70</sup> *Chron.* 5. 37: again *Domninos* seems to be the source.

<sup>71</sup> On Homer, Athenaeus 3. 157b; cf. *Anth. Pal.* 7. 417. On Aristophanes and this whole phenomenon, see the essays collected in Braund and Wilkins (2000); Graf (2015).

further south too. The Scythian connection was taken to explain the name of the city of Scythopolis. Malalas relates how the pursuing barbarians sent by King Thoas chose to give up the chase and settle there. For such pursuers too were accorded a legacy, as with the Thoas who died at Tyana and gave his name to that city (Arrian, *Periplus* 6) and the Colchians who abandoned their pursuit of Jason and Medea and settled in the northern Adriatic.<sup>72</sup>

Antiochene Malalas was likely to take an interest in the matter, not only because of the general location of Scythopolis, but also because of the importance of the Orestes link in his own city. However, we may be sure that the tradition was much older than the sixth century. The name demanded an aetiology, which can hardly have waited until late antiquity. As with the tetrapolis, we know how ambitious such Seleucid foundations were to claim a place in familiar Greek myths more usually set in mainland Greece.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Malalas' story neatly embraces both names of the city, Scythopolis and Nysa. While Scythian settlers gave the former name, the virgin sacrificed by Iphigenia (at local request) provided the latter, for the girl was called Nysa, or Nyssa in Malalas' version. The succession of names gives some reason to take this story back to the first century AD, but dating remains problematic.<sup>74</sup> Certainly, the startling notion of a virgin sacrifice presided over by Iphigenia is but one instance of a sustained theme in Malalas' work, wherein a series of more or less surprising individuals are said to have sacrificed virgins as part of civic foundation. It has been suggested that this is the influence of Christian polemic.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, we should observe that Ammianus Marcellinus too was almost certainly a man of Antioch since he knew Syriac<sup>76</sup> and may be the Antiochene recipient of a famous letter of Libanius, congratulating him on his writing (*Letters* 1063). In view of Taurian-related traditions in the tetrapolis, his remarks on the Taurian cult in the Crimea become especially interesting, even though we cannot be sure how far these Syrian traditions had developed by the time he wrote in the third century AD. We are left to wonder whether these traditions may account for his extraordinary assertion that the Taurians call their goddess not Diana but Orsilochē (22. 8. 33–4). However, Antoninus Liberalis (apparently after Nicander) had

<sup>72</sup> Braund (1994).

<sup>73</sup> Hollis (1994) not least on Euphorion, and on Nicator's claim to be the son of Apollo.

<sup>74</sup> In fact, the city was first Scythopolis and then Nysa (Rigsby (1980)), but Pliny, *NH* 5. 74 asserts the reverse, as in Malalas' story, though he prefers to explain the name Nysa differently.

<sup>75</sup> Garstad (2005); cf. Rives (1995).

<sup>76</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 18. 8. 20–1, with Barnes (1998) for extensive bibliography.

already recorded a version of her story wherein Iphigenia became a deity named Orsilocheia, together with much else that veers away from dominant traditions. The name is nowhere explained in antiquity, but certainly evokes the childbirth with which Iphigenia was associated at Brauron and Artemis more generally around the Greek world.<sup>77</sup>

### Between Lake Nemi and Asia Minor

While Apulian vases show that the Taurian tale was current in Italy by the fourth century BC, Etruscan art demonstrates that its roots go much deeper and earlier than that.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the story starts to appear as soon as we begin to see Romans writing their own history, as in Cato's *Origines*. There is a sense of Orestes and Iphigenia throughout the region,<sup>79</sup> but of particular interest is the cult of Diana at Lake Nemi, near Aricia. The cult and its peculiar priesthood attracted writers' attention from Cato onwards.<sup>80</sup> Here the Taurian tradition seems to have coexisted with a story centred on Hippolytus, while Numa's dealings with the nymph Egeria there added one of several further dimensions to its significance in Roman notions of the past and present. Both Ovid (*Met.* 14. 331–2) and Strabo (5. 3. 12) link the cult with the Taurians, although both prefer to write of Scythia and Scythians. However, Ovid can elsewhere uphold the Hippolytus alternative.<sup>81</sup>

For Augustan authors it was doubtless important that the family of Augustus' mother, the Atii, belonged to Aricia; they were much involved with the cult at Nemi. Moreover, Julius Caesar had built a villa there which Augustus seems to have developed.<sup>82</sup> And the cult at Nemi was convenient for Rome: it lay some twenty-five kilometres to the southeast in

<sup>77</sup> Ant. Lib. 27, where Iphigenia is the daughter of Theseus and Helen, and ultimately united with Achilles on Leuke: further, Zeitlin (*forthcoming*).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Nielsen and Rathje (2009); Hall (2012) ch. 7 and below on the Rhodope krater.

<sup>79</sup> See the range of possible associations collected by Hall (2012) ch. 7, e.g. with Artemis Phakelitis on the Straits of Messina; also Graf (1979) 34 on Sicilian Tyndaris: note too that Orestes was a Tyndarid, through the mother he murdered. For a valuable overview, Fischer-Hansen (2009).

<sup>80</sup> White (1918) gathers the key texts. In general, Green (2007); Pasqualini (2009).

<sup>81</sup> Ov. *Fasti* 3. 261ff.; cf. Paus. 2. 27. 4: 'The Aricians tell a tale that agrees with the inscription on this slab that, when Hippolytus was killed, owing to the curses of Theseus, Asclepius raised him from the dead. On coming to life again he refused to forgive his father rejecting his prayers, he went to the Aricians in Italy. There he became king and devoted a precinct to Artemis, where down to my time the prize for the victor in single combat was the priesthood of the goddess. The contest was open to no free man, but only to slaves who had run away from their masters.'

<sup>82</sup> Guldager Bilde (2004); (2005); cf. (2003). Note also that Caesar had been in Cappadocia: further, Lord (1938) 30 on *Bell. Alex.* 66. 3.

the Alban hills: Ovid refers to the goddess there as *suburbana Diana* (*Ars amatoria* 1. 259). Orestes gained a fresh significance in the early years of the victor at Actium, as key to the ending of civil conflict under the auspices of Apollo.<sup>83</sup> For the poet of the *Metamorphoses* the goddess is ‘Scythian Diana’, while the geographer offers more information and the notion of a Scythian atmosphere there. The volcanic environment of the site doubtless contributed to that feeling,<sup>84</sup> but there was more besides:

The Artemision which they call *Nemus* (Latin = Grove (of Diana)), is on the left hand side of the road to those who go up it from Aricia. They say the temple is a kind of copy (*aphidruma ti*) of Tauropolos’. Indeed, a barbaric and Scythian ethos holds sway around the sanctuary. For the priest, a runaway slave, takes office by killing his consecrated predecessor with his own hand. So, armed with a sword, he is always looking around, ready to ward off attacks. (Strabo 5. 3. 12)

The link to Tauropolos is explicit, but we are not told here whence the *aphidruma* had come.<sup>85</sup> Strabo later identifies Halae Araphenides as the location of ‘the temple of Tauropolos’ (9. 1. 22), so that he might have thought that the cult had come from there to Lake Nemi. After all, he quite rightly says nothing about Tauropolos among the Taurians, and certainly does nothing to suggest that he supposed a cult of that goddess there. Correctly, he writes instead of Parthenos in the Crimea. We must observe that the link to Tauropolos is not Strabo’s own: it is the cult-myth told at Nemi itself. Strabo reports that myth, without comment, presumably because in his view it chimed with the so-called Scythian ethos there. It would be good to know what Augustus thought on the matter: he was evidently sensitive to the story of Orestes and Pylades, which lies behind his appointment of Dyteutus at Pontic Comana.<sup>86</sup> Strabo himself, however, was attracted by the competing claims of Cappadocian Comana, as we shall see.<sup>87</sup>

The local myth about Taurian origins at Nemi is further explained a few centuries later, when we again hear something substantial of the stories told at Nemi, thanks to Servius’ commentary on Virgil, written c. AD 400. He reports a popular view there that Orestes had killed Thoas and brought the famous *xoanon* to Nemi from the Taurians, together with Iphigenia.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Further, Champlin (2003) with earlier bibliography; cf. Spannagel (1999); Hjort Lange (2016).

<sup>84</sup> Lanciani (1896) conjures an extraordinary sense of the atmosphere there.

<sup>85</sup> On Strabo’s use of the term: Anguissola (2006).

<sup>86</sup> On Augustus, Orestes and Dyteutus, see Braund [forthcoming](#).

<sup>87</sup> In general, Saprykin (2009).

<sup>88</sup> Servius *ad Virg. Aen.* 6. 136: *publica tamen opinio hoc habet. Orestes post occisum regem Thoantem in regione Taurica cum sorore Iphigenia, ut supra diximus, fugit et Dianae simulacrum inde sublatum*

That would fit well enough with what Strabo has to say, for the killing of Thoas offered a much needed aetiology for the murderous succession at Nemi which the geographer considered Scythian in ethos. Whether this was the killing of the Taurian king connected with Chryses and Apollo Smintheus is beyond our knowledge.<sup>89</sup> In any event, the ephebic martial alertness of the incumbent (described here by Strabo) combines with the wild environment to make the association between myth and ritual practice strong enough. Strabo's reticence on these matters probably arises from his rejection of this Orestes story: Servius is clear that the learned rejected it in his day in favour of a myth about Proserpina. Moreover, it did not fit well with stories told in Strabo's native Cappadocia, in some of which he shows much more belief.

In describing the important Tauropos-like cult at Cappadocian Comana, Strabo observes what Pausanias was later to deny, namely that Orestes and Iphigenia had carried there the *hiera* 'from Tauric Scythia' (Strabo, 12. 2. 3). He proceeds to describe the practice of devoting hair (*kome*) there, which was etymologically connected with the name of the place, while we may also note his choice of the verb *komizein* to describe the siblings' 'carrying' of the *hiera*:<sup>90</sup> that choice may arise from a related etymology about their foundational act at Comana.

Meanwhile, at Cappadocian Tyana there was also another temple where the claim was made that Orestes had brought the deity from the Taurians and that she was called Perasia because he had brought her 'from the other side (*peras*)' of the Black Sea. At Tyana there is no evidence of bloodletting, but Strabo mentions a fire-walking rite there for females. With particular implausibility, the people of Tyana also claimed that the Taurian king Thoas had chased Orestes and his entourage as far as the site of their city, where he died of an illness, as its governor Arrian tells us.<sup>91</sup> No doubt Thoas' tomb was pointed out there; it was probably close to the cult.<sup>92</sup>

Strabo is notably impatient with Tyana's claims, by contrast with his account of Orestes at Comana, about which he is respectful. It may be no coincidence that he had spent some time at the latter, as he tells us,

*haud longe ab Aricia collocavit. in huius templo post mutatum ritum sacrificiorum fuit arbor quaedam, de qua infringi ramum non licebat. dabatur autem fugitivis potestas, ut si quis exinde ramum potuisset auferre, monomachia cum fugitivo templi sacerdote dimicaret.*

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 121 and above p. 26.

<sup>90</sup> No doubt the statue, but perhaps more besides was envisaged.

<sup>91</sup> Arrian *Periplus* 6. 4; cf. Baz (2007) on Arrian.

<sup>92</sup> He also notes a Tauropolian oracle on an Arabian island (Strabo 16. 3. 2), and the cult on Ikaria (Strabo 14. 1. 19), but says nothing of Syrian claims. There were too many: cf. Samos, also omitted: Carlsen (2009).

while its general importance in the Cappadocian kingdom would also have weighed heavily with him. Accordingly, he is notably silent about cult-practice there, though the Taurian connection might well suggest blood-letting. Indeed, the Latin tradition was much taken with the bloodiness of the cult's self-mutilation: it is here that we have a Scythian/Taurian mood. However, partly in view of Strabo's silence perhaps, it is in the cult of Ma-Bellona in Italy that we hear of such bloodiness in any detail, though at least some of the deity's fanatical followers there seem to have come from Cappadocia.<sup>93</sup>

Strabo is clear too in his (less than impartial) view that Pontic Comana<sup>94</sup> was a derivative of its Cappadocian namesake, which was evidently not only a Hittite cult-centre but even a Hurrian one before that.<sup>95</sup> Much later, in the sixth century, Procopius (*Wars* 8. 17. 12–20) offers more detail on Orestes' supposed activities in Asia Minor, which extends the information of these earlier writers and shows no sign of being late accretion. Procopius is explicit that both cult-centres called Comana claimed much the same foundation by Orestes and his party. Here we learn that, rather as on his way to the Crimea, Orestes was sick with a kind of madness, and that an oracle had told him that only by temple-building for Artemis would he be relieved. Procopius adds that Orestes built a temple for Iphigenia too at Cappadocian Comana, which might imply her demise there. Finally, he unveils another etymology, arising from the supposedly similar landscape of Cappadocian Comana and the land of the Taurians around the temple there (a further aspect of this process of reproduction). The Taurus Mountains, it emerges, were said to derive their name from their Taurian counterpart.

As the Syrian tradition had transferred the Taurian story to northern Syria, so this tradition took the story to eastern Anatolia. Their claims entailed not only the famous statue, but most of the myth. Similarly, in the Italian tradition that emerges with the fragments of Cato (fr. 17 Peter), we find not only the arrival of Orestes in Italy, but also a sense of Taurians there, in inhabitants of southern Italy whose name evokes them. In this curious process, these communities, which were located far from the Crimea and far from the Greek heartland, took the Taurian tale of Euripides and other writers and recreated it in a form that made maximal

<sup>93</sup> Tibullus 1. 6. 43ff.; Horace, *Sat.* 2. 3. 223; Martial 12. 57; Juvenal 4. 123f.; 6. 511ff. Fishwick (1967) 145 on syncretism with Cybele, Bellona, etc.; cf. too Wiseman (1982) 58. On Ma's iconography: LIMC s.v. Ma (Proeva). Also Lazarenko et al. (2013) on Ma at Dionysopolis.

<sup>94</sup> Ercivas and Burcu (2009).

<sup>95</sup> Strabo 12. 3. 32 with Schmidhauser (2008).

sense in their own locales. The establishment of cult-centres by Orestes and his companions, through the relic of the *xoanon*, was not the whole story, but rather a fulcrum on which turned each local version of the myth as a whole. In several of these instances, it seems clear enough that the reproduction of the Taurian cult entailed also the reproduction of Taurians and the refocusing of Orestes' cure from his matricidal madness to cult-centres around the world which might also claim to constitute an antidote to the internal strife that was represented by Orestes' matricide and the other horrors of Atreus' house.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, the bloodiness of these various ritual practices was not only excused by their barbarian origins, but was also reconfigured to display a civilising progress from barbarous human sacrifice to a local form of bloodletting of a far more mild and controlled kind.

At first sight, the cult at Lake Nemi was very different from the Taurian ritual, for there it was the blood of the priest that was shed, and by the new priest. This was not obviously a youth at a rite of passage, but a priest always on his guard and ready for action, looking round about him, as Strabo describes. Also apparently different was the element of slavery specified at Lake Nemi, where the priest must be a runaway slave. Servius proves helpful once more, stating that the Romans had been repelled by the human sacrifice of a slave which had been carried out there, so that the practice was stopped and commuted in this way. That was a fine rationale, and a tribute to Roman decency.<sup>97</sup> However, having reviewed so many of these cults and rituals, we can appreciate that at Nemi too it is more than the statue that has been taken from the Crimea. The priest ready for action is himself another Orestes and at once another epebe, for whom Orestes was so much the model at Halae and elsewhere.<sup>98</sup> His sword at the ready reproduces epebic ritual and dance for Artemis, in which the sword figured prominently: indeed, his movements are almost a martial dance.<sup>99</sup> And his escape from slavery to priesthood re-enacted the escape of Orestes from his powerlessness in Taurian hands to priesthood. Intriguingly, the notion of Orestes as a runaway was important also in northern Syria, as Malalas notes (5. 37), though of course the idea had developed along a different path there.<sup>100</sup> The death of the priest at Lake Nemi was the death that Orestes had escaped among the Taurians. Rather as at Halae, this

<sup>96</sup> Hall (2012) esp. ch. 7 does well to refer repeatedly to the curative and protective powers of these cults.

<sup>97</sup> Servius *ad Virg. Aeneid* 2. 116, where a transfer is claimed to Sparta.

<sup>98</sup> Porter (2003) and above.

<sup>99</sup> Bron (1996).

<sup>100</sup> There he was a runaway because he had left so quickly after his cure on Mt. Amanus.



death-ritual was recompense for the deity, again achieved by the use of a sword. At the same time, without contradiction, the killing of each slave-priest could be seen too as a mitigated version of the slave-sacrifice that had been practised there until the Romans had brought their own version of civilisation. Accordingly, while the cult at Lake Nemi was indeed different from the others, it was also organically connected with them in these ways. Moreover, it may not have been the only cult wherein the priest spilled his blood, for we have observed a trace of that in the cult of Cappadocian Comana too. The awkward fact remains that, while we can trace this network of cult-centres linked to the Taurian deity by Orestes and his companions, we know very little about the rituals that were carried out in each of them.

We are only glimpsing the skein of myths and rituals, texts and performances, that formed the larger set of cultural milieux in which these various Taurian tales were embedded. The point is demonstrated well enough by an Apulian vase of the later fourth century BC.<sup>101</sup> It is sometimes known as the Rhodope krater, and is attributed to the Darius Painter. Here a man named Skythes sits enthroned, holding prominent sceptre to suggest his power, while a spear-bearer approaches from behind him. Skythes gestures towards an odd assortment of individuals, who all have some relevance to the Black Sea region, which Skythes' name also suggests. For Rhodope, Heracles and Antiope stand before him, the latter holding an infant Hippolytus, her child. While Rhodope's name evokes Thrace, Heracles had travelled all over the region (we have seen him at Bosporan Heracleum), while the Amazon Antiope also had a place there. Hippolytus is less at home, but he is an infant, and we have also seen that he may be brought into the circle of Orestes' myth, albeit at a later age. The nature of the debate is wholly obscure to us, for want of literary enlightenment, but the scene must be a myth, drama or both. The gesture of Skythes and the movement of his spear-bearer tend to indicate that Rhodope and her associates are in some danger, though the mighty Heracles can hardly have been at risk. This motley group suit a Black Sea location, so that Skythes is readily understood as a Scythian king. However, given the imprecise usages that we have had cause to notice in Greek traditions, he might be a Taurian or another native of the region, though it would be perverse to insist on the possibility that he might be somewhere else entirely. There is much of interest here, but the main point for the present discussion is that our inability to interpret the scene nicely demonstrates how much we do

<sup>101</sup> Schmidt, Trendall and Cambitoglou (1976) esp. 94–108 for valuable discussion; Taplin (2002) 244.

not know about the many tales told of Greeks and barbarians in the Black Sea. Moreover, there is every likelihood that Taurian Artemis is importantly involved in the story on the vase. For a rather manly Artemis, dressed for hunting and with a hound, presides over the whole scene from a higher register. There she sits on an altar, while beside her stands a pedestalled *xoanon*. She seems contemplative, and perhaps rather glum, presumably with regard to the scene at Skythes' court below her.

### Conclusions

In all this it is quite extraordinary that we hear nothing at all of any notion that human sacrifice among Taurians had been commuted into some less deadly form of bloodletting among Greeks of the Crimea. All the more so, when we consider how strongly that theme recurs across the Mediterranean. It is not impossible that lack of data in the Crimea is the cause, but we do know rather a lot about the cult of Parthenos at Chersonesus in particular. Further, the retention of the name Parthenos there and in the Bosporan kingdom seems to signal an actual difference between the conception of the deity in the Crimea and the cults elsewhere which claimed to be derived from a Taurian origin. Herodotus had heard about their human sacrifices, and others had too before him, but the apparent absence of that theme in the Crimea may well suggest that these ghastly rites were products of the Greek imagination. It is not inconceivable that Taurians did on occasion make such sacrifices, as did Greeks from time to time and others too in antiquity.<sup>102</sup> However, Crimean Greeks, for all their undoubted awareness of tales about Taurians, were well placed geographically and culturally to know better, as we have seen. It is quite possible that there was no commuting of human sacrifice in Crimean cults of Parthenos, because in the Crimea they knew that Parthenos' cult had never been the focus of regular human sacrifice, despite the undoubted capacity for violence among the Taurians of the mountains in particular. Such ghastly images predominated among others further afield, whether at Herodotus' Olbia or across the Mediterranean.<sup>103</sup>

By contrast, Taurian sacrifices of humans – Greeks *in primis* – were of fundamental importance at a range of cult-centres around the Mediterranean, as we have seen from Italy to Syria and Palestine. But crucially these

<sup>102</sup> Hughes (1991); Bonnechere (1994).

<sup>103</sup> Graf (1979) terms Taurian human sacrifice 'sailors' tales' and brackets them with episodes in the *Odyssey*.

Taurian sacrifices belonged to a society that was very distant in time as well as in geographical space. True, some Taurians continued to be a menace in the Crimea, despite the efforts of the Greek states there and later the Roman military. But that abiding misbehaviour was far from the focus of attention in the cult-centres of the Mediterranean. The Taurian sacrifice that mattered to them was that faced by Orestes and Pylades. It was to this very specific set of imaginary events that the various cult-centres around the Mediterranean looked in claiming a Taurian origin for their practices.

This was more the world of the theatre and other forms of storytelling, among which Euripides' play (and Pacuvius' famous Roman version of it) figured prominently. For that reason, as Christians and non-Christians argued through claims and counter-claims about where human sacrifice was practised and by whom, Tertullian was quite right to dismiss the Taurian tales from such debates: 'I leave them to the theatres where they belong'.<sup>104</sup> After all, he was a man of Carthage, where human sacrifice had different resonances, and where, importantly, there seems to have been no tradition about the arrival of Orestes and his companions from the Taurians. Presumably Herodotus' paragraph on Taurian sacrifice contributed a sense of its reality: this was a canonical text. However, even his account must have looked like part of a novel under the Roman empire, if not before. For the bandits and pirates who filled the novels were familiar too as practitioners of human sacrifice, so that the murderous bandits of the Crimea were all the easier to overlook or dismiss under the *pax Romana*, where bandits had become more about entertainment than a lurking terror.<sup>105</sup>

However, in contemporary Sparta, for example, tales of Taurian sacrifice retained a real purchase as a vital feature of a distant past in a distant place which was somehow also the present and here, at the cult-centre which Orestes had created with the active and powerful Taurian image. We have seen how barbarian origins explained and justified strange practices of bloodletting which were otherwise hard to account for and accept, especially at Sparta. The history of the image could be inscribed in the history of the community at large, complete with the totemic Lycurgus, as Pausanias makes clear at Sparta. At the same time, their antiquity was assured, even where cities were palpably Hellenistic foundations, as in Syria and also in Philadelphia near Sardis.<sup>106</sup> There the city's name came from its Attalid

<sup>104</sup> *Remitto fabulas Tauricas theatris suis*: Tertullian *Apol.* 9. 1. On the debate, Rives (1995), albeit missing Tertullian's point.

<sup>105</sup> Winkler (1980); Shaw (1984); cf. Morgan (1989) on supposed Ethiopian human sacrifice.

<sup>106</sup> Burrell (2005).

founders of the second century BC, expressing the relationship between the brothers Eumenes II and Attalus II. And yet the city's claim to Orestes, Pylades and Iphigenia also, without apparent conflict, projected its name into the mythical past from which its version of Artemis' cult was said to have come.<sup>107</sup>

As to the specific rituals at these different cult-centres, we know so little about most that we do not see the full range of bloodletting practices traced to their Taurian origins. However, we can observe the outline of major differences across space and time. In classical Athens and Sparta, it is the young men who spill their blood. They are ephebic versions of Orestes as they suffer a form of 'death' which marks their transition from a boyhood left behind as they change to a new life in manhood. We may suspect a similar ephebic rite at Elis, and no doubt elsewhere around Greece proper in cults of Artemis, not least as Tauropolos. What remains unclear, however, is how such rites mapped onto the more general notion at Elis and probably at Athens that ephebes were also Scythians/Taurians. Problematically, they seem to have been both the 'sacrificers' and the 'sacrificed', though not necessarily at the same time. We do not know how that apparent inconsistency may have been managed, but it was important that there was something Scythian/Taurian about Orestes himself, as we have had cause to observe from time to time.<sup>108</sup> His bloody matricide and the long fair hair that was so important at cults of Comana and was flagged repeatedly in Athenian tragedy, made him rather Scythian in deed and appearance, as Lucian's *Toxaris* observed for other reasons besides. Indeed we may see that Scythianness as part of the madness which he lay aside with the blood-mad *xoanon* in founding these various cults. If that is right, we may begin to understand, therefore, how each ephebe, as an Orestes, could have been both the barbarian sacrificer and the Greek sacrificed, presumably progressing through the former to the latter and beyond to manhood as an adult citizen.

In the current state of our knowledge, such inferences must be provisional, but they at least have the advantage also that they help to account for the proximity of Thoas and his Taurians to some of these traditions, whether with Thoas' burial at Tyana, the events at Scythopolis or the version of Euripides' play, wherein Thoas strives to behave piously throughout by

<sup>107</sup> On the phenomenon in general see Scheer (1993) and (2000).

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Eur. *Andromache* 995ff. for his role in the knifing of Achilles' son at Delphi, who is thus both sacrificer and sacrificed. The incident may be seen as a continuation of the Achilles–Iphigenia relationship. In general, Burkert (1997).

accommodating the shifting demands that seem to come from Artemis and Athena, and by accepting the removal to Attica of the *xoanon* by his fleeing priestess. Meanwhile, the evocations of the Taurians' name resounded across Greek religion. For Zeus, Poseidon, Dionysus and Apollo himself regularly appear as Taurians, insofar as *Tauroi* are *Bulls* in Greek. Indeed, Euripides showed the Taurians' veneration of Apollo, as well as his sister, while Apollo too was an architect – with his sister Artemis, Poseidon and Athena – of Orestes' mission to the Taurians. Artemis and Athena, too, may also be associated closely with cattle.<sup>109</sup> This was the land of Taurike, allegedly named after the bulls yoked by a ploughing Osiris there,<sup>110</sup> where the bovine Io (former priestess of 'ox-faced' Hera) crossed and so named Ox-ford, Bosphorus.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, we have observed how men may be 'bulls' in religious associations, and, above all, that there is reason to suspect that Athenian ephebes at Halae were themselves 'bulls', that is *Tauroi*. There, at least, our (admittedly limited) evidence therefore supports the conclusion that ephebes were not only 'sacrificer' and 'sacrificed', but at the same time also 'Athenian Greek' and 'Taurian barbarian', 'Orestes' and 'Thoas' or his *boukoloi*, his cattle-herdsmen. Much remains uncertain about these inferences, as also about the Tauropolia more generally at Halae and its relationship to Brauron, where Artemis was depicted on a bull already c. 500 BC.<sup>112</sup>

At Nemi, by contrast, it was the priest who became Orestes. So too, in a less individualised way among the ministrant-followers of the cults of Cappadocian Comana and probably Pontic Comana. Rites in Syria and Palestine are wholly obscure to us, as also in Lydian Philadelphia. However, we may be sure enough in broad terms that these local variations on bloodletting were rooted also in regional traditions that came ultimately from outside Greek culture, whether in Italy or in the Near East. There the range of syncretic processes entailing not only Artemis, but also Athena, Cybele and others indicates the cultural interactions underlying the development of each cult.<sup>113</sup> It was Greek culture, however, that had

<sup>109</sup> McNerney (2010) 113, albeit not concerned with Taurians; on whom, further, McNerney (2015).

<sup>110</sup> Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Taurike; cf. p. 173 on Osiris; Diod. 4. 47 on bulls as Taurian troops.

<sup>111</sup> On Bosphoran exploitation of that name, see p. 156.

<sup>112</sup> Parker (2005) 241–3 offers judicious comment and the best translation of Tauropolos, 'bull-ranger' (or indeed, '*Tauroi*-ranger', as Euripides has it); Guldager Bilde (2009) 305 offers 'bull-tamer', but the Greek has no sense of taming, except insofar as that might follow from ranging about on bulls. Of course, the Brauron votive with Artemis side-saddle on a bull (LIMC Artemis, 674, no. 701, and Parker) cannot be used to argue that *Tauroi* were excluded or somehow Euripidean invention: further, Seaford (2009).

<sup>113</sup> Further, Hjerrild (2009) with bibliography.

supplied Orestes, Pylades, Iphigenia and Taurians, however complex may have been the process.

These myths and rituals embraced a range of variations and potential disputes not only about the fate of the image from the Taurians, or the rituals at each cult, but also about quite what had happened. For example, had Thoas accepted Orestes' escape, or pursued him or been killed by him? In other words, *how* had the image been brought from the Taurians. And what was the upshot of its removal for the cult of the Taurians: some thought that a statue also remained with them, as we can see painted at Pompeii.<sup>114</sup>

Throughout, however, there was a dominant affirmation of the values and superiority of Hellenic culture in the face of barbarism, whether in mainland Greece or transported to east or west. While the myth excused and explained barbarous ritual among Greeks, and rooted it in a distant place and time, it seems consistently to have been centred on the notion that human sacrifice had been mitigated not only within Greek culture, but also because of it. Servius tends to confirm the importance of that when he makes the same claim for Roman civilising at Nemi. The barbarian alternative, fraught with violence and devilish dangers, had been brought inside Greek culture, which had made it tolerable, while abiding bloodletting confirmed the reality of the civilising process that had occurred.

In that way, the ideology of the Taurian myth, whether at these cult-centres or more generally, contributed to the wider Greek claim to have made the Inhospitable Sea into a sea that was indeed hospitable through the arrival of Greek culture there, mitigating barbarism through colonial settlement.<sup>115</sup> And it is at this point that the two divided approaches to the Taurian cult find substantial common ground. For while the Greeks of the Crimea seem to have had a different conception of the Taurian deity, as we have seen, we may be sure enough that they shared this beneficial ideology of Greek colonialism, not least because they were agents of and heirs to that very process. In the Crimea, clearly, the deity had been appropriated from the Taurians in a different way, without an Orestes to take her far and wide. And yet, the appropriation was the goddess' will in both broad traditions, for otherwise nothing can have happened. We do not know how human sacrifice was handled in Crimean Greek traditions, but we have noted the complete absence of any hint of its mitigation in the Crimea, by contrast with traditions elsewhere. Unless we are misled by our extant sources, it

<sup>114</sup> Sharply observed by Burrell (2005) 235.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Leigh (2010) 135–6, for similar analysis of the theme in Hellenistic and Roman poetry.

follows that the Greeks of the Crimea supposed either that the deity had never received such sacrifices among the Taurians, or that she had no wish for them of any kind – mitigated or not – after her transition to the Greeks there. Finally and importantly, the fact that Chersonesus, in particular, enjoyed constructive relationships with Delos to the extent that Delians might be thought to have been involved in the very settlement of the city, adequately illustrates the fact that, ultimately, differences about bloodletting rituals between Crimean Greeks and their brethren elsewhere were no real obstacle to communication and constructive relationships. Such was the invaluable elasticity of polytheism, which could accommodate without serious rupture the various conceptions of the deity and claims to her image that Pausanias helpfully summarises for us.<sup>116</sup> Accordingly, it would be no surprise to find Ma, the goddess of Comana, in Chersonesus too, as she was at Olbia and perhaps also in the Bosporan kingdom.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, while there may have been uncertainty over topographical details and the like, there was no reason at all why Euripides' play could not be performed in the theatres of Chersonesus, Nymphaeum or elsewhere in the Bosporan kingdom. On the contrary, the play brought the region into Attica and associated the Greek periphery there with perhaps the centre of Greekness.<sup>118</sup> The Greeks of the Crimea knew full well that there were competing conceptions of Parthenos, in whole and in part, but they also understood how that very competition was key to their connectedness with Greek culture at large, rather as the city of Philadelphia sought to use its Taurian tradition to support its desired bond with the cult of Artemis at mighty Ephesus.<sup>119</sup>

At the same time, there was nothing problematic for the Bosporan kingdom, nor for Crimean Chersonesus, in the bloody ways of the Taurians. For, as the foundation of Chersonesus entailed the end of human sacrifice to the goddess, so the Bosporan kings claimed mastery of the Taurians too, even in their royal titles, which amounted also to a claim that they had at least mitigated Taurian barbarism. In that way Greeks of the Crimea too could share in the ideology of Athenians, Spartans and the rest that the Taurians were the barbaric source of bloodiness in their cults, which had converted human sacrifice into forms which might seem

<sup>116</sup> Not exhaustively, of course: even the Armenians might claim a link, indeed arguing that the prior events in the Crimea had in fact taken place among them: Procopius, *Wars* 8. 5. 23–5, citing Armenian sources.

<sup>117</sup> See Ivantchik (2004). Cf. a Chersonitan dedication to Parthenos at Olbia: SEG 28. 658.

<sup>118</sup> Further, Braund and Hall (2014).

<sup>119</sup> At length, Burrell (2005).

bloody enough, but were nevertheless contained within bounds. Once again, we find in these developing interactions between Greeks of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea world, a strong sense among Greeks everywhere that Hellenism had civilised the Black Sea, transforming the Axine into the Euxine, and even accommodating its most barbaric features in acculturated form. In so doing, Greeks thereby found an assurance that their more bloody rites were not of their own making. Further, under the Roman empire, this whole colonialist ideology had become a key part of the hallowed Greek past, desired especially by Greeks far from the heartlands, as in distant Syria. In this context, far removed from classical Athens in time and space, the Taurian story became not only a civilising engagement with barbarity, but also a means to validate local Hellenism by connecting it with this hallowed past and, at the same time, joining in the myth's celebration of the key social values that appear both in Euripides' play and in the world of the later Greek Mediterranean, not least in its favourite novels. This was a remarkable process whereby, at least from Euripides onwards, myth and cult that seemed to be about barbarian human sacrifice was revealed as an affirmation of friendship and the other best social and religious values among Greeks. And in that process, of course, the problematic and bloody behaviour of Orestes, and of his family more generally, were accommodated (if not quite solved) through his model conduct among the Taurians. After all, it could also be held that the barbarous strand in Orestes' family had itself come from the distant lands of Phrygia and its environs, where Tantalus had once served the dismembered body of Pelops, his son, as food for the gods.<sup>120</sup> Restored to life, Pelops had himself faced the Scythian ways of Oenomaus, the murderous father of his bride-to-be, Hippodameia. Indeed, Sophocles had explicitly designated Oenomaus' tendency to scalp his victims as 'Scythian style',<sup>121</sup> so that there was a significant sense in which Orestes was not the first in his family to engage with barbarism, nor even with the ways of its north Black Sea variety. Taurians did not scalp, to be sure, but they did cut off and display heads at their houses (as Oenomaus was also said to do), while we have seen how distinctions between Scythians and Taurians were commonly ignored. Accordingly, Athenian drama shows an element of circularity in Orestes' Taurian adventure with his sister, in part

<sup>120</sup> Further, O'Brien (1988).

<sup>121</sup> Soph. fr. 476; chariots and horses might also evoke Scythia: Braund (2011b). On circularity in myths of colonisation, see further Malkin (1998).



a reprise of Pelops' adventure with his bride, so that Euripides' allusion in the prologue of *IT* to Pelops and the Oenomaus' story is very much to the point. Moreover, for all the reasons we have seen, the powerful circularity of Greek myth revolved too for the proud Greeks of Roman Syria, and for the others who claimed a place in the swirling versions of the tale of Orestes among the Taurians.

*Artemis of Ephesus in the Bosporan Kingdom*

Ephesian Artemis is an extraordinary deity. On the one hand she is Artemis and, therefore, familiar enough in the Greek world, where the goddess Artemis proliferates under a range of local identities.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, however, this is an Artemis whose fame in antiquity was quite outstanding, and whose appearance and cult-organisation are strikingly different from other instantiations of the goddess.<sup>2</sup> Her cult-image was reproduced repeatedly in antiquity, and in a wide range of media: it was unmistakable and immediately recognisable, in the Crimean Bosphorus as elsewhere. At the same time as her expansion far and wide, however, the strong local bond of the goddess with Ephesus abided, expressed not least in her name, as also her bond with her mighty temple there. This was the famous Artemision, whose history (at least as relevant here) turns on two key moments. The first came, in the middle of the sixth century BC, with the construction of a temple identified as an Artemision, including a great statue attributed to a certain Endoios. Funds were provided by Croesus, who would later become king of the Lydians, famous for his wealth.<sup>3</sup> The previous cult-centre is identified archaeologically, but the nature of the goddess(es) and cult activities there remains most unclear. The second key moment came two centuries later, in 356 BC, with the burning of that Artemision. Reconstruction followed, wherein the extent of any change is unclear.<sup>4</sup>

The iconography of Ephesian Artemis continues to tease, especially the much-discussed protuberances.<sup>5</sup> These could hardly be more striking,

<sup>1</sup> Not unproblematically, of course: e.g. Braund (2017b) on Bendis and others.

<sup>2</sup> Parker (2011) 226 aptly insists on this strangeness, with comment on Bremmer (2008). On the eunuch priest Megabyzus in action in Greece, see below p. 123. Artemis of Aeolian Astyra perhaps comes closest to Ephesia, if we may judge from her small coin-image: Fleischer (1999) 607–8 and pl. 151. 4; cf. also Fleischer (1973) 56 for other comparable cults.

<sup>3</sup> Hdt. 1. 92; Muss (2008c) 48 for other sources and discussion.

<sup>4</sup> Muss (2008c), 51.

<sup>5</sup> Morris (2008) locating much of the iconography in an Anatolian context. Cf. Rogers (2013).

and contribute substantially to making her image so recognisable. The question soon arises: are these breasts? And that question is more than trivial, since their identification is part of our whole understanding of the goddess. There is substantial agreement among scholars that they are not in fact breasts. For they are part of her attire: they lack nipples (with three possible exceptions) and seem not to be part of the flesh of the goddess insofar as they fail to show the dark skin-colour sometimes given on the face and hands of her images. While explanations might be hazarded to account for these circumstances, it is also important that such 'breasts' are known too on male images of western Asia Minor, notably that of Zeus at Labraunda, an unlikely hermaphrodite.<sup>6</sup> However, for all the agreement that they are not breasts, there remains a lively enough debate about their interpretation. Some scholars support the imaginative suggestion that these are bulls' scrota. Bulls would be understandable,<sup>7</sup> but it is unclear why bulls' scrota should figure so prominently on her image, or indeed at all.<sup>8</sup> Bone studies suggest that bulls were not particularly prominent among the animals offered in sacrifice in the Artemision.<sup>9</sup> Of course, perceptions vary and can change, whatever the historical origins of images. There were some in antiquity who saw these protuberances as actual breasts, as did polemical Christians. It has been observed that they do seem to have become more breast-like in the later history of the image.<sup>10</sup> However, there is a telling silence in antiquity about their being bovine scrota, which we should note and probably emulate. Meanwhile, astrological symbolism has also been claimed for the image, which would be especially interesting if the case were stronger.<sup>11</sup>

The image of Ephesian Artemis, though known to us overwhelmingly from extant images of the Roman period, evidently retained even at that late date much that comes from a considerably earlier period.<sup>12</sup> Particularly

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Fleischer (1973) pl. 138. Further, LiDonnici (1992); Fleischer (1999) 605. Also Kasyan (2013) on bees.

<sup>7</sup> Note particularly the bull's head that features prominently in a fragment of a statuette found out of context on the acropolis at Panticapaeum: Savostina (1996); in general, McInerney (2010).

<sup>8</sup> The scrota were suggested by Seiterle (1979); variously discussed by Burkert (1999); Portefaix (1999); in detail, Fleischer (1973); (1978); (1999). Thiersch (1935) remains useful on the iconography. LiDonnici (1992) 393 torpedoed Seiterle's theory most effectively.

<sup>9</sup> Forstenpointner, Krachler and Schildorfer (1999); Forstenpointner and Weissengruber (2008). In consequence, Fleischer (1999) 609 takes castration to be key, not sacrifice.

<sup>10</sup> LiDonnici (1992) 397.

<sup>11</sup> Heinzel (1972–5).

<sup>12</sup> The earliest extant images are usually taken to be those on cistophoric coinage of the mid-second century B.C., where the demands of the medium make inference difficult: Fleischer (1999) 606–7, rather confidently. On possible earlier images in the northern Black Sea, see further below.

notable is its strong frontality and its static pose, with legs and feet tight together, recalling an archaic *kouros*. It is plausibly inferred that the extant images derive from an earlier archetype in wood. The use of wood would account for the dark skin that is sometimes to be seen in later images.<sup>13</sup> That is not to say, however, that the cult remained the same throughout the history of the city, for it clearly did not. Accordingly, in considering Artemis Ephesia we must retain a strong sense of chronology and at least caution in moving between different periods, for marked continuity in the cult was accompanied by change, and our evidence for the cult in different periods is very much imbalanced. Accordingly, we shall see that the unevenness of our knowledge of the cult against that chequered background of continuity and change generates a significant set of uncertainties beyond the more specific problems of interpreting the iconography of cult-images.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the striking contrast between the physical appearance of Ephesian Artemis and other representations of most other forms of Artemis is of the first importance in its own right. For that contrast illustrates the more fundamental fact that the cult offered a marked alternative to the cult of Artemis (and by extension those of Apollo and Leto) which were familiar in the Delian tradition. Most fundamentally, the Ephesians insisted that it was not on Delos but in their own city that Leto had given birth to Artemis and Apollo, in a riverine grove there.<sup>15</sup> This was of the first importance in Ephesus, as was the cult of Artemis herself. Strabo shows how this foundational cult-myth in Ephesus was mapped onto the landscape in which the city was located: regular ritual re-enacted key features of the myth at this very place. In particular, the Curetes, young<sup>16</sup> men who attended upon her cult, reproduced the great din of arms that had forestalled the intervention in Leto's birthing of a jealous Hera, who was far from well disposed towards another woman's production of her husband's children. The sympotic celebrations which were the ritual counterpart to that myth were noisy affairs. Indeed, the whole notion of their vital noise-making neatly encompassed male action as key within a tale of female birth-giving, and also made it possible for men to celebrate the birth as central participants

<sup>13</sup> Fleischer (1999) also on the removable attire of the statue and changes in representational details; cf. Burkert (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Oster (1990) 1699–1700 makes the point well, quoting Strabo 14. 1. 23, the beginning of the especially well attested Roman imperial period.

<sup>15</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 3. 61 is clear that this was the Ephesians' own claim; cf. Hornblower (1992) for the possible significance of competition between Delos and Ephesus in the fifth century B.C.

<sup>16</sup> Bremmer (2008). Under the Principate, at least, they were not always young; Graf (1999) 255–6.

in the myth and its concomitant ritual, here as elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> We are left to consider how far all this was reproduced in the myths and practice around the goddess in other locations. However, it seems unlikely, for example, that the rivalry with Delos was often important outside Ephesus itself, even if the application of hard logic might seem to require as much.<sup>18</sup>

At Ephesus, meanwhile, such was the importance of Artemis' cult that her successive temples there became the stuff of legend in their own right, while the one reconstituted after the famous fire of 356 BC was regularly listed among the Seven Wonders of the World.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, one of our earliest lists of such wonders makes it the most wondrous of them all.<sup>20</sup> For the Hellenistic poet Antipater (whether Antipater of Sidon or his later homonym from Thessaloniki) writes that 'the sun never looked upon its like'.<sup>21</sup>

Much earlier, and most certainly by the end of the fifth century BC, Greeks (some, at least) had come to regard Ephesian Artemis as a deity shared between Greeks and non-Greeks and, at the same time, as a goddess who in a strong sense both represented and protected not only Ephesus but also Asia more generally.<sup>22</sup> The stories connected with Herostratus' totemic burning of her temple in 356 BC not only address the folly of the fame-hungry arsonist, but also group around the goddess' dual links to Greeks and non-Greeks.<sup>23</sup> For it was said that Herostratus' act of arson occurred at the very moment when Alexander the Great was born in Macedon (Plut. *Alexander* 3), the man who would conquer Asia and, in so doing, also assimilate Greek and non-Greek there.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, in similar vein, this burning of the temple is said to have caused grief not only to Greeks at Ephesus and beyond, but also to the Magi among the Persians.<sup>25</sup> Already in the mid-sixth century BC it had been a Lydian king, Croesus, who had financed at least a portion of the construction of Artemis' massive new

<sup>17</sup> Further, Strabo 14. 1. 20 (with Graf (1999) 258), comparing their similar role on Crete at the birth of Zeus.

<sup>18</sup> See also later on the varying prominence accorded Amazons.

<sup>19</sup> A list that varied, but see, notably, Philo Byz., *On the seven wonders of the world* 6. Further, Priestley (2014) 88–90.

<sup>20</sup> Gow and Page (1968) 2. 20–1; Argentieri (2003) on the poets Antipater.

<sup>21</sup> *Anth. Pal.* 9. 58 = Gow-Page 91; cf. 92 = *Anth. Pal.* 9. 790.

<sup>22</sup> Croesus had shown the way. Burkert (1999) 60–1 draws attention especially to her appearance in the *Persians* of Timotheus, c. 400 BC; cf. Ar. *Clouds* 599 and attendant scholia. On possible realities, Brenk (1998).

<sup>23</sup> Further, LiDonnici (1992) 400.

<sup>24</sup> Stavrianopoulou (2013) offers a range of interesting perspectives on Hellenistic Greekness.

<sup>25</sup> Notably, Cic. *ND* 2. 69; *Div.* 1. 47.

temple at Ephesus.<sup>26</sup> His involvement was characteristic of his generosity to Greek deities, as Herodotus indicates (1. 92), but it also serves to highlight further the cross-cultural aspects of the cult. Those appear again, for example, under Mithridates Eupator, some five centuries later.<sup>27</sup> In that regard we should observe also that Strabo and Pausanias believed that the goddess' cult at Ephesus significantly antedated the arrival of Greek settlers in the region.<sup>28</sup> In historical Ephesus, this was very much a Greek cult, but it might also be a cult of more extended significance for the region and for humanity more generally.<sup>29</sup> Archaeology indicates a peripteral temple there from the eighth century BC, which suffered massive flooding; the debris includes amber pendants which have been claimed as an early form of the protuberances on the goddess' statue.<sup>30</sup> The early detail illustrates something of the wealth and the reach of the developing cult-centre.<sup>31</sup> As temples elsewhere, the Artemision at Ephesus was also a treasury:<sup>32</sup> it held enormous deposits of private and communal wealth, which further contributed to its aura of grandeur, which in turn meant that no one dared to loot it and suffer the anger of Ephesian Artemis.<sup>33</sup> Imperial Greek culture was very explicit about the abiding greatness of Ephesian Artemis, her cult and her wondrous temple, rebuilt once more after the fourth-century conflagration.<sup>34</sup>

Already, we begin to appreciate how Ephesian Artemis, for all her undoubted fame and significance, has left a host of problematic issues from first to last, and not only in matters of iconography. She was and remains a controversial deity.<sup>35</sup> In this chapter we shall not explore all aspects of that enigma, for here we are not concerned with her origins or with the specifics of her cult buildings at Ephesus, for example, but with her spread

<sup>26</sup> Hdt. 1. 92; cf. Tuna (2010).

<sup>27</sup> Metenidis (1998) and the literature he cites.

<sup>28</sup> Strabo 14. 1. 21; Paus. 7. 2. 6, quoted below; Morris (2008) on cult and settlement there from the late Bronze Age.

<sup>29</sup> We must reckon also with the tradition that Amazons played a key role in the creation of the cult: Callim. *Hymn to Artemis* 237; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 795d on young women serving the goddess.

<sup>30</sup> But see the damning remarks of Fleischer (1999) 608, with bibliography.

<sup>31</sup> On amber supply, Braund (2014b).

<sup>32</sup> See below on Xenophon's finances: p. 121.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. Dio Chrys. 31. 54. Aelian, *VH* 5. 16 is a small exception that proves the rule.

<sup>34</sup> See Paus. 4. 31. 8, quoted below; cf. IK Ephesos 18b; Thomas (1995).

<sup>35</sup> Muss (2008a) collects pithy summaries of issues and more recent finds. Understanding of the cult is not helped by the hostile Christian tradition that contributed much to its ultimate destruction, if not quite as much as it would have wished, for Goths in particular played their part in AD 263, though the cult continued into the fifth century: Muss (2008c), 52; cf. Acts 19; IK Ephesos 1351, a Christian rejoicing in his part in her downfall. Further, Gow and Page (1968) 2. 92 for rueful comment.

outside Ephesus from archaic times, and in particular with her presence in the Bosporan kingdom. At the same time, however, by following that rather neglected path into the study of the goddess, we can contribute also to issues of iconography and other matters with which scholars have been rather more concerned.

### **The Bosporan Evidence: Ephesia and Agrotera**

The remarkable cult of Ephesian Artemis is attested several times in the epigraphic record of the Bosporan kingdom, though she seems never to occur in any literary account of the region. Nor is she ever to be seen on Bosporan coinage, by contrast with Aphrodite Ourania and even Isis. Almost all the Bosporan inscriptions are dedications cut in stone, of which we have only a few (at most, four). They all cluster in the fourth century BC, though we shall see also a dedication to the goddess on metal, which was inscribed much earlier:

- (1) Of these inscriptions on stone the earliest is CIRB 6a, dated to the reign of Leucon I (c.389–348) and cut on white marble. It was purchased from a man who claimed to have found it in the vicinity of Panticapaeum, which is all that we can know of its location:

of Nymphaios, dedicated the altar to Ephesian Artemis, being priestess, while Leucon was archon of the Bosporus and Theodosia and Sindians, and king of the Toretae, Dandarii, and Psessi.<sup>36</sup>

The dedication was made, possibly by a female, who identifies herself as the daughter (as it seems) of a certain Nymphaeus. Plausible restoration also makes her a priestess of Ephesian Artemis, which in turn gives a context for her dedication of the altar to the goddess. In principle, a male dedicant cannot be excluded.

- (2) Under Leucon's successor, Paerisades I (c. 349–310), we have another dedication on stone to the goddess, again from Panticapaeum, CIRB 11. The inscription was cut on a statue base:

of Koiranos dedicated (this) on behalf of his/her daughter Itie to Ephesian Artemis, while Paerisades was archon of the Bosporus and Theodosia, and king of the Sindians and all the Maeotians.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> [ἡ δεῖνα Νυμ]φαιίου τὸν βωμὸν [ἀνέθηκεν Ἄρ]τέμι Ἐφεσείῃ [ἱερωμένη, ἀρχ]οντος Λεύκωνος [Βοσπόρου καὶ Θεο]δοσίας [καὶ Σινδῶν κ]αὶ βασιλεύοντος [Τορετέων, Δανδ]αρίων, Ψησσῶν.

<sup>37</sup> [ὁ δεῖνα] Κοιρ[άν]ου ἀνέθηκεν [ὑπὲρ τ]ῆ[ς θυ]γατρὸς Ἰτίης Ἀρτέμιδι Ἐφεσείῃ ἀρ[χοντο]ς Παρισάδου Βοσπόρου καὶ Θευδ[οσίας] καὶ βασιλεύοντος Σινδ[ῶν καὶ Μαίτ]ῶν πάντων.

Here the dedication was made by someone connected with a certain Coeranus (probably his son or daughter), on behalf of a daughter, whose name is Itie.<sup>38</sup> The name Koiranos is interesting: we can only wonder if this family included also the Koiranos who was subsequently honoured with proxenia on Delos in the later third century BC for his religious services, since the name is not particularly common and the link to Artemis is suggestive.<sup>39</sup> In the Bosporan case, however, the dedication took the form of a statue, whose broken base alone has survived, in grey marble. As always in such circumstances we cannot be completely confident in identifying the statue, but it may well have been a statue of Ephesian Artemis herself.<sup>40</sup> If so, we have a good idea of its appearance, thanks to the other images of the goddess in stone that have survived, even though these are all substantially later (further, below). Her image was at once singular and ubiquitous, while it seems also to have been consistent in its key features. The numerous copies of the statue that have survived tend strongly to suggest that any statue of the goddess in the Bosphorus was richly decorated, perhaps including dark skin and golden attire. Presumably, any Bosporan statue also sported the characteristic protuberances.<sup>41</sup>

- (3) Meanwhile, also in the reign of Paerisades I, a priestess of Artemis (perhaps Ephesia) made another dedication, apparently across the straits at Hermonassa, where the stone was found (CIRB 1040). Unfortunately, the stone has been lost, a fact made all the more unfortunate by the particular points of interest which the recorded features of the stone certainly raise:

dedicated the statue, being priestess, to Ephesian Artemis, while Paerisads was archon of the Bosphorus and Theodosia, and king of the Sindians and all the Maeotians.<sup>42</sup>

Here a priestess is certainly at issue, as was suspected in no. 1, above. The inscription was cut at the foot of a stone chair, in white marble,

<sup>38</sup> She is thus Coeranus' granddaughter. Cf. the epitaph of an Itie in the same city, a few decades earlier: CIRB 193.

<sup>39</sup> IG XI. 4. 609.

<sup>40</sup> Lacroix (1949) esp. ch. 3, remains very valuable on statues of Artemis.

<sup>41</sup> That inference would be problematic if one followed LiDonnici (1992) in her claim that the statue only acquired this feature from 356 BC, but her argument relies on acceptance of the literal truth of the tradition reported by Strabo that Massalia acquired its statue as a copy from archaic Ephesus, which stretches credence: see further below; Fleischer (1973) 137–9 observes other differences between the Ephesian and Massaliote images. In general, Malkin (2011) ch. 5; cf. Demetriou (2012) 61.

<sup>42</sup> [ἡ δέϊνα ἀνέθηκεν] ἄγαλμα ἱερωμένη Ἄρ[τέμιδι Ἐφεσείῃ] [ἄρχοντας Παιρισάδεος Βο]σπόρου καὶ Θεοδοσί[ς καὶ βασιλεύοντος Σίνδ]ων καὶ [Μ]αίτ[ων πάντων].



mostly lost. However, a strong vegetation design occupied at least some of its rear, while a lion's paw survived at its front. The inscription mentions both the image (*agalma*) and the dedicant's current priesthood, which provides a context for the dedication. However, in dedicating the image, the priestess seems not to have identified herself by reference to a relation, in contrast with the apparent priestess of no. 1, above. In addition to the inscription proper, individual letters were observed, scratched with apparent carelessness on the smooth surface of one side, by contrast with the clearly cut inscription at the foot of the chair. The meaning of these letters remains obscure. It is not impossible that these were an example of the so-called 'Ephesian letters', which, like the letters on our chair, were supposedly written indistinctly on statues of the deity.<sup>43</sup> We now know them as early as the fifth century BC, among western Greeks.<sup>44</sup>

However, the more fundamental question is the very identity of the goddess. That we have Artemis is beyond any reasonable doubt, since the first two letters of her name were to be read. However, it is only the restoration of Shkorpil that makes her *Ephesian* Artemis. And so, perhaps inevitably, the restoration has been challenged. Artemis *Agrotera* has been suggested instead.<sup>45</sup> In the absence of the stone, it is especially hard to know how to settle the matter. In view of Shkorpil's experience and expertise in Bosphoran epigraphy, we may prefer to retain his restoration, as do the editors of CIRB. However, this was evidently a seated figure, while Artemis Ephesia is familiar in her recurrent standing posture. That might have been fatal to Shkorpil's Ephesia, were it not for the fact that we have a similar problem with an Asia Minor relief of the Roman period which seems also to show Ephesia seated.<sup>46</sup> Discussion of that relief has generated two explanations which might serve to explain also this seated figure from Hermonassa. The first editor argued that this figure was not the goddess, but the priestess. However, that is problematic for the Bosphoran case, since we should properly expect an *agalma* to be the figure of a deity, not a mortal. Of course, in the Bosphoran case, without the image we are especially in the dark. As for the relief, there is also the alternative explanation that its seated figure is indeed Ephesia, but an Ephesia who was amalgamated with another

<sup>43</sup> Eustathius, *ad Hom. Od.* T 247, quoting the lexicographer Pausanias (not the periegete); cf. McCown (1923) 129, still very useful; further, Burkert (1999) 63; Portefaix (1999) 616.

<sup>44</sup> Notably, at Himera: Jordan (2000). Cf. also Bettarini (2012); Del Monaco (2012); Burkert (2012).

<sup>45</sup> Lur'ye (1948) 211 n. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Horsley (1992).

female deity, perhaps a local form of Cybele.<sup>47</sup> That might also explain our Bosphoran figure, but it requires unsupported assumptions about the goddess and her local identifications. A third possibility may be that the goddess on occasion could be represented not in her usual standing pose, but as a seated figure. Accordingly, the identification of the deity must remain in significant doubt, despite the authority of Shkorpil, at least until we find a seated figure who is clearly Artemis Ephesia.

As for Artemis Agrotera, there is only a single stone from the Bosphoran kingdom which mentions her there. However, it attests the construction of a temple for her in the same general vicinity as our no. 3 and at much the same time, also in the reign of Paerisades I. This is CIRB 1014:

Xenokleides, son of Posis, dedicated the temple to Artemis Agrotera, while Paerisades, son of Leucon, was ruler of the Bosphorus and Theodosia, and king of the Sindians and Toretæ and Dandarii.<sup>48</sup>

One might be tempted to locate this building at the site of Mayskaya Gora, on high ground outside Phanagoria. The numerous dedications from that important site indicate that the cult there was already very active in the archaic period, while the predominance of female terracotta figures seems to suggest a female deity or deities. Artemis would be likely enough.<sup>49</sup> However, the circumstances of the discovery of Xenocleides' dedication are against any direct link with the complex at Mayskaya Gora. For we are told that the stone was spewed forth by the mighty mud volcano of Boris and Gleb, situated further north on the Taman peninsula, between modern Taman (ancient Hermonassa) and Temryuk, apparently together with some other hewn stones. This is well to the east of Mayskaya Gora on the western side of Akhtanizovskiy liman, by Stanitsa Akhtanizovskaya. The shortage of good stone on the Taman peninsula has caused an unusual mobility in the ancient stone remains there, but in this case at least we seem to have a provenance beyond reasonable challenge. Moreover, the impressive mud volcano constitutes a still more suitable location for the construction of a temple for Artemis Agrotera than Mayskaya Gora might have done, despite the more modest volcanic activity there too.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Graf (2003) 253–4.

<sup>48</sup> Ξενοκλείδης Πόσιος ἀνέθηκε τὸν ναὸν Ἀρτέμιδι Ἀγροτέραι ἄρχοντος Παιρισάδου τοῦ Λεύκωνος Βοσπόρου καὶ Θεοδοσίας καὶ βασιλεύων Σίνδων καὶ Τορετῶν καὶ Δανδαρίων.

<sup>49</sup> Guldager Bilde (2009) 310 summarises the evidence well. See further, Ilyina (2010) on terracottas; Braund (2012) on suggested deities. Also Meyer (2013) 267 (read Blevak).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Sokol'skiy (1957) for remains of ancient construction on Boris and Gleb, on which see Muratov (2015).

- (4) The presence of Ephesia in the Asiatic Bosphorus is demonstrated by an even more fragmentary text. For CIRB 1114 serves to confirm the goddess' presence on the eastern side of the straits, at Gorgippia. The forms of its letters indicate that this inscription too was cut in the second half of the fourth century BC:

*and (?) ... ippos dedicated (?) (this) to Ephesian Artemis.<sup>51</sup>*

Just enough survives to show that the goddess is indeed Ephesian Artemis. In this case, the dedication (as it seems to be, apparently by more than one dedicant) took the form of a rectangular plaque of white marble, a portion of whose carved frame has survived with only the right side of the inscription which it bore. It was obtained by purchase locally, so that its find-spot remains unclear, but there is no reason to doubt that it was discovered at or near Gorgippia, modern Anapa. What we do not know, however, is the nature of the goddess' presence in or near the city. Exuberant inference from this plaque to a temple of Ephesia in Gorgippia is best restrained.<sup>52</sup>

Taken as a whole, these inscriptions come from a rather narrow chronological range, all being dated to the fourth century, and three of them to its second half. And we have seen that the inscription dedicating a temple to Artemis Agrotera also comes from the later fourth century BC. Meanwhile, by remarkable contrast, we have no sign of Ephesia in the Bosphorus of the Roman period, when the goddess' cult was widespread and well attested, not least in Asia Minor. The imbalance is all the more remarkable when we consider that the majority of our inscriptions from the Bosphorus belong to the Roman period. While the chance of survival must always be admitted in explanation of such irregularities, the concentration of these dedications in the later fourth century will require consideration. Part of the explanation is doubtless the general prosperity that we see across the kingdom in these years, most obvious in the expansion of settlement in the civic territories of the kingdom and reflected also in Demosthenes' assertions about the kingdom's grain surplus in the middle of the fourth century.<sup>53</sup> There were resources for temples and the like. But that is only the most general

<sup>51</sup> [— —]προς [— —]αν [Ἀρτέ]μιδι [Ἐφε]σείηι.

<sup>52</sup> Pace Gaidukevich (1971) 232.

<sup>53</sup> Demosthenes' claims are to be treated with great caution in any case (Braund 2008a), while Karpov (1993) amounts to a salutary warning against focus on Bosphoran grain alone in the Black Sea.

of contexts, and it remains to understand why Ephesia enjoyed this passing local vogue in the Bosphorus.

Of the first importance for earlier centuries is an inscribed bronze fragment found on so-called Mt. Mithridates, the acropolis of Panticapaeum. The fragment is small (some 9.7 cm in length) and bears along its length, centrally, a deeply cut inscription in Greek. It was discovered in a level that might be as late as the early centuries AD, though this particular section of the excavations has also been described, perhaps better, as 'disturbed ground'.<sup>54</sup> There is a nest of difficulties and uncertainties. The key problem is that we know nothing of the life of this object, for example how it came to be on the acropolis and with what intent. It was a dedication, as the inscription makes clear enough, but we cannot be sure where it was dedicated, in what context or under what circumstances. The issue is all the trickier because we know that there was metalworking on the acropolis and it may be that the dedication had been gathered there with other bits of metal for reworking.<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, an element of doubt must attend any inference about the object and there is certainly no warrant at all for inferring anything as grand as a temple of Artemis Ephesia there, for example, even though there is a building which might suit such a role.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, however, appropriate scepticism must be balanced with the fact that this is an early dedication to the goddess, however and wherever it may have been made. Its discovery on the acropolis certainly raises the question of her possible cult in Panticapaeum in archaic times.

The object itself has been identified brilliantly as the handle of an Etruscan strainer of a type known in Italy and occasionally found in Greece, notably at Olympia and at Lindos on Rhodes.<sup>57</sup> Thanks to that identification, the object can be dated with confidence to the middle or later sixth century BC.<sup>58</sup> That dating tends also to settle a long-standing argument about the date of the inscription, for it supports (albeit not altogether conclusively) the case for dating the inscription also in the middle or later

<sup>54</sup> Marchenko (1957) 162.

<sup>55</sup> Evidence of metalworking where the handle was found was noted by the excavator, Blavatskiy (1962) 25; cf. Treister (1990b) for metalwork in bronze on Mt. Mithridates in Hellenistic times.

<sup>56</sup> Yu. G. Vinogradov (1990) 507, after Rozanova (1960), had thoughts of a temple of Ephesia on the acropolis of Panticapaeum, encouraged by the slight support of some dedications to Artemis among graffiti there, though they need not concern Ephesian Artemis: see Tolstoy (1953) nos. 163 173, 175–6, 184, all broadly from the fourth century BC. On building remains, see Muratov (2015). The reading and interpretation of Senamotis' dedication (to a Dithagoia?) remain problematic: contrast SEG 37. 674 with 47. 1193.

<sup>57</sup> Treister (1990a): it is not part of a tripod, as once thought.

<sup>58</sup> Treister (1999); cf. (1990a).



Figure 7 The earliest image of Artemis Ephesia? (Panticapaeum, found in 1949: Pushkin Museum, inv. no. GMII M-410). © V. P. Tolstikov, Pushkin Museum, Moscow

sixth century BC, c. 550–525 BC. There has been argument too about the content of the inscription itself, but that seems now to be agreed. In fact, the letters are very clear:

Σῶν Ἀρτεμι Ἐφεσ (SEG 36. 721)

This must mean, ‘Son (dedicated this) to Artemis Ephesia’, where Son is the name of the man who made the dedication. The unfamiliar name has its parallels elsewhere as we shall see. The fact that the body of the strainer is missing may cause speculation that we may not have the whole inscription. However, the inscription looks discrete on the handle as we have it, so that there is no indication in what we have that this is only part of the inscribed dedication. Rather less immediately clear is whether the dedication consisted of the whole strainer or merely of the handle, a simple object, but also a striking shape.

Indeed, the part-handle deserves attention in its own right, particularly because of that unusual shape. For, while the whole object and the handle’s

inscription have been studied with exemplary care, it seems to have passed unnoticed that once the part-handle is placed vertically, it seems clearly to represent a humanoid figure, with an upwardly elongated head (and *polos*-like headgear), two outstretched arms, and two legs set apart. This is certainly a section from the handle of an Etruscan strainer, but the original long handle seems to have been cut to produce this figure, hardly a matter of accident. Accordingly, we should probably consider our object not so much as a fragment, but as the bronze figurine into which it has been transformed. Evidently, this 'fragment' was dedicated in its own right, not as part of the whole strainer.

The sense of its 'head' is assisted by the fact that it is formed by a separate metal platelet, set slightly above the rest of the body, as if having a distinct and rounded chin. The 'arms' reach out sideways and continue down to join the feet, though on one side a section of the arm is broken off. The inscription runs up the centre of this figure, from the groin to the top of the head, to be read from the side that now has the broken arm. Of course, the inscription points us again to Artemis Ephesia. Moreover, this image seems to represent the goddess herself. For it was common practice to offer to deities images of themselves.<sup>59</sup> And the bronze figure bears a notable resemblance to other figurines dedicated to Ephesia, which is all the more remarkable in a shape cut from a handle.

It remains to compare the bronze figure of the handle with other images of Ephesia, especially figurines. The comparison is not helped by the fact that, although we have many images of the deity, there is very little of her iconography extant<sup>60</sup> that can be dated before the middle of the second century BC, some three or four centuries after the image of the part-handle. The Artemision at Ephesus has produced only a very small number of humanoid figures in bronze.<sup>61</sup> In consequence there is inevitable uncertainty about the physical appearance of the goddess before the second century: it is all the more a pity that our one or two Bosphoran statues in stone have not survived from the fourth century, as was noted above. The problematic uncertainty is exacerbated by the suggestion that a new cult-image was created after the fire of 356 BC, a claim that has opened

<sup>59</sup> E.g. Lazzarini (1976) no. 130, a bronze figure of Apollo dedicated to Apollo, c. 500 BC.

<sup>60</sup> However, we must note the ivory statuettes from the archaic Artemision at Ephesus, with their distinctly non-Greek style: Isik (2001). The nature of the goddess(es) there before the mid-sixth century BC remains a matter of keen discussion, as also the interpretation of these early images, both in ivory and precious metal: Muss (2008b). The terracottas present similar problems: those of the classical period include kourotrophic seated females: Dewailly (2008).

<sup>61</sup> As noted by Klebinder-Gauss (2008) 150, contrasting other materials: there is no particular reason to see Artemis herself.

the door to hypotheses about the form of the statue before that date.<sup>62</sup> However, there is no particular reason to believe that the image before 356 was much different from the image after that date, with its many minor variations on a strong and much-repeated theme. There was no obvious need to change the form of the statue in 356, even if we accept that the earlier statue was destroyed in that conflagration, which is a considerable assumption, especially as it seems to have been light enough to move without too much difficulty. The painting of it by Micon's artist daughter, Timarete, evidently survived (Pliny, *NH* 35. 147). Moreover, the image that we know from after that date has a distinctly archaic appearance, as has often been observed. The most probable reason for that is that it was the archaic statue, or reproduced the form of that statue closely. Conservatism is much more the rule than the exception in such matters in antiquity.<sup>63</sup>

Accordingly, the image formed from the cut-down handle may reasonably be compared with the images that we have from after 356. Immediately, the identification of the image as Ephesia is confirmed, albeit with one not insignificant flaw. The elongated head of the handle-image matches very well the tall headgear often worn by Ephesia, the *polos*. Its outstretched arms also reproduce very well the outstretched arms of the cult-image, even if those are often much more stubby than the arms of our image. Moreover, terracotta and bronze statuettes (which are the closest comparanda in any case, not least through their size and material) sometimes show the arms connected to the feet of the image, as with our handle, whether by extended sleeves or by staffs.<sup>64</sup> The same tendency to join her hands and feet is observable also in other media.<sup>65</sup> However, our image does not correspond to these other images in one respect, namely the spacing of the legs. For, in other images the legs of the deity are held straight and close together, to give a rather columnar effect. The legs of our image are not at all like that. Clearly, it can hardly be claimed that the cult-image had its legs in a different posture before 356, even if that is theoretically possible. It is far more likely that the dedicant, the rarely named Son, took the view that the image formed by the handle was sufficiently close to the image of the deity to serve as a dedication, despite this apparent flaw. After all, he was fortunate to have a handle which could

<sup>62</sup> Notably, LiDonnici (1992).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Burkert (1999); Fleischer (1999).

<sup>64</sup> Esp. Fleischer (1973) pl. 43 (bronze); cf. pl. 49 (terracotta).

<sup>65</sup> See Thiersch (1935) pls. 45.2 (mosaic), 47.3 (gem); cf. 49. 14 (coin), etc.

begin to serve this function.<sup>66</sup> Of course, the handle-image also lacks the much-discussed ‘breasts’, which was no part of the strainer’s design. By placing the inscription over the upper body of our image, its inventive creator dealt with this problem very effectively. Meanwhile, we are left to wonder (we can do no more) whether the handle, the strainer as a whole or perhaps wine, had any more particular association with Artemis Ephesia in the mind of the dedicant. It is well-known, for example, that the cult of Ephesian Artemis featured symposia (see further below): had the strainer been used in such festivities, so that the image formed from its handle was all the more appropriate as a dedication to the deity?

Nor is this the only abiding question about the handle. The discovery of the object in a level including material more than half a millennium after its production leaves ample scope for speculation about its history in those intervening years, as also does its discovery far from its place of production, in isolation from objects of its kind and provenance. Moreover, this is the earliest example of Etruscan bronze yet to be found on the north coast of the Black Sea, even if more is known to have followed in the fifth century and thereafter.<sup>67</sup> For that reason, many believe that the strainer (not simply the handle) came to Panticapaeum among the personal possessions of an archaic colonist from the eastern Aegean. Indeed, the tendency for pottery of various kinds to be brought from northern Ionia in the sixth century BC has encouraged the more specific suggestion that the object had been brought from there, not direct from Etruria. And that argument is sometimes extended to include Ephesia’s cult, with the claim that her cult was brought to the northern Black Sea by Ephesians.<sup>68</sup> In principle such claims are possible in the context of our limited evidence on such questions, despite the awkwardness that the form of the cult title used in the Bosphorus may have been slightly different from what seems to have been the norm at Ephesus itself.<sup>69</sup> However, the fundamental problem with such claims is that any number of other accounts might be advanced too. For example, one might better look to Rhodes as an intermediary for the object’s journey from Etruria to the Black Sea: not only does Rhodes boast another of these strainers, but it is also one of the few places where we know of a

<sup>66</sup> On occasion the handle of an Etruscan strainer might even incorporate a figure: see Zuffa (1960) 198, no. 29 with illustration. Perhaps Son had been inspired by such handles.

<sup>67</sup> On later Etruscan bronze in the Black Sea, Treister (1990a) 166; cf. Braund (1994) 70.

<sup>68</sup> Treister (1999) developing Ehrhardt (1983) 153–4, who suggests that Milesians took her cult to the Black Sea. Cf. too Kolesnikov (2003).

<sup>69</sup> Tokhtas’yev (2005) 9.



man (albeit from Cyrene) with the rare name Son.<sup>70</sup> Alternatively, one might argue, for example, that the object (or its handle alone) had not reached Panticapaeum until much later, for its potentially Roman context is a concern. Again, in view of the object's Etruscan origin and the strength of Ephesia in the western Mediterranean, a rather different kind of story might be imagined there too. However, none of these hypotheses has much to recommend it.

### Ephesian Colonisation?

In fact, modern attempts to bring archaic Ephesus into the larger picture of archaic Greek settlement overseas serve rather to highlight her absence from that process, which should probably be explained in terms of the city's prosperity, not least because of the success of the cult of Artemis there. It is not only that Ephesian colonists do not occur at all in the extensive and varied (if also fragmented) range of texts about 'archaic Greek colonisation', but also that on the exceptional occasion where Ephesus has some relevance to a colonial story there is no sign that the city was thought to have provided settlers. Of course, the absence of Ephesian settlers from these texts is not conclusive: *a priori* it would be most unlikely if no one ever left archaic Ephesus to make a new life in an archaic colonial foundation. But the absence is not to be brushed aside, especially in view of the fact that, where we have an odd example of an individual leaving archaic Ephesus, we do not see him heading for a colony. The satirical poet Hipponax went to nearby Clazomenae (which is attested in colonial traditions, e.g. at Abdera). It is clear enough that, for all its prosperity, the history of archaic Ephesus was troubled enough, so that departures were likely: for example, we hear from Heraclitus of a certain Hermodorus, forced out by what may be democratic tendencies in the city (fr. 121 DK). However, that is not to say that all or many of the expelled and disenchanted made their way to the challenging environments of distant colonies. Even the Phocaeans who abandoned their city to Harpagus and his Persians sailed to the western Mediterranean only as a second best. For Herodotus states that they first had wanted to settle on islands nearby, which belonged to Chios (Hdt.

<sup>70</sup> On the name, SEG 36. 721; A. Matthaiou (*per litteras*) confirms the name at Camirus, sometimes erroneously given as Ison, as by LGPN 1: I am grateful to Richard Catling at the LGPN project for advice on this name. Note also another Son in the Black Sea at Istros: LGPN 4 *s.v.*, fourth century B.C. Cf. also LGPN II *s.v.* On Hellenistic traders between the Bosporan region and Rhodes, see Agatharchides, *On the Erythraean Sea*, 66 with Burstein (1989). See also Chapter 5 on the 'Taman Aphrodite' and its Rhodian counterpart.

i. 165). No doubt the fact that the Phocaeans were whole families, not just adventurous young men, must have made particularly unattractive the prospect of a lengthy voyage into the unknown or barely known. Small wonder that, according to Herodotus, half of the Phocaeans preferred to forgo the journey and reconcile themselves to life in their native city under Persian control.<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, while conflict entailing Lydians and Persians was a feature of civic life in archaic Ionia (whether in the form of military clashes with them or played out in the internal politics of the city), it is a wholly unsatisfactory habit of modern scholarship to rely on these relationships with non-Greeks as the major stimulus to overseas settlement from Ionia. A glance at the broader history of Greek colonisation makes it very clear that many of the Greek states which dispatched colonies had no involvement at all with Lydians, Persians or the like. Indeed, one wonders how far the popularity of this mode of explanation is the result of what may politely be termed an excess of hellenophilia and hellenocentrism, whether among moderns or in the works of the few ancient Greek writers who make any mention of what scholars construct as a barbarian menace.<sup>72</sup> The case of the Phocaeans seems more the exception than the rule, as also the Tean settlement at Abdera with which Herodotus links it.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, it may well be the very exceptionality of the Phocaeen example that causes Herodotus to give it so much prominence in his *Histories*, for, as has been well observed, it is the exceptional which attracts his eye much more than the usual.<sup>74</sup> Certainly, as he rounds off his excursus on the Phocaeans and offers a few words about Teos, Herodotus is wholly explicit that these were the only Ionians who abandoned their cities in the face of the Persians (i. 169).

The Phocaeans are of special relevance also to the notion of Ephesian involvement in colonial settlement and the role of Artemis Ephesia. For it is with regard to earlier Phocaeen settlement at Massalia that Strabo provides the kind of information about Artemis Ephesia in colonial tradition that we do not have for the Black Sea region.<sup>75</sup> In so doing he not only shows once more the absence of Ephesian colonists, but also offers insight into how Ephesia's cult was thought in antiquity to have travelled from Ephesus to the colonial margins and, indeed, how it may actually have travelled.

<sup>71</sup> On settlement by whole families, see Braund (2014a).

<sup>72</sup> Tuna (2010) urges the case for a Lydian element in Ephesian society itself.

<sup>73</sup> Braund (2014a) with bibliography.

<sup>74</sup> E.g. Strid (2006).

<sup>75</sup> On the emergence of Massalia, see Dietler (2010).

We should now perhaps not be surprised to find this very passage used to support claims that Ephesus did send out colonists, although Strabo here says nothing of the sort:<sup>76</sup>

Massalia is a foundation of the Phocaeans ... On the promontory is situated the Ephesian and the sanctuary of Apollo Delphinios. The latter is common to all the Ionians, but the Ephesian is the temple of Artemis the Ephesian. For they say that the Phocaeans received an oracle as they were leaving their homeland, that they should take from Ephesian Artemis a leader of their voyage. And they say that when they put in at Ephesus and asked how they might obtain such from the goddess, Aristarche, a woman of particular esteem, said that the goddess had appeared to her in a dream and instructed her to take a certain image from among the sacred objects and leave with the Phocaeans. And they say that, once this was done and the colonial expedition reached its goal, they established the sanctuary and bestowed exceptional honour on Aristarche whom they appointed to the priesthood. And they say that in the colonies which they subsequently themselves founded, they honour this goddess among the foremost and they retain the very design of her *xoanon* and the other proprieties, the same as have been observed in Massalia, their mother city. (Strabo 4.1.4)

Evidently Strabo here relates a local Massaliote tradition, since his account offers an explanation of the prominent role of Ephesian Artemis in a city which has no obvious connection with Ephesus and the recreation of that prominent role also in the colonies of Massalia, about which Strabo has something to say also elsewhere in his *Geography* (e.g. 4. 1. 5 and 8). It is clear enough that Ephesian Artemis enjoyed a strong following in the western Mediterranean, and not only by virtue of Massalia.<sup>77</sup> Some sense of Carthaginian attitudes to the goddess emerges from Hannibal's particular respect for the goddess.<sup>78</sup>

The story is in that sense key to civic practice and local notions of the very existence of Massalia (and *a fortiori* its colonies), since Ephesian Artemis plays a vital role in the city's origin-story. Strabo does not specify the source of the key oracle which took Phocaeans to Ephesian Artemis, but the collocation of her sanctuary at Massalia with that of Apollo Delphinios tends to suggest that the oracle was ascribed to the latter. It would be no surprise to find Apollo and Artemis linked in such a way: it suffices to recall Apollo's role in sending Orestes to the Crimea in quest

<sup>76</sup> *Contra* Dominguez (1999).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. also Strabo, 4. 1. 6 on notions of her links to Diana on the Aventine at Rome.

<sup>78</sup> Pliny, *NH* 16. 216 with Metenidis (1998) who might have made still more of that Carthaginian connection.

of the *xoanon* of Artemis Tauropolos and much else besides, notably in Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.

While Apollo advised the Phocaeans, it was Ephesian Artemis herself who led them: the sibling deities could both be leaders in colonial ventures, whether separately or, as in this case, together.<sup>79</sup> For the goddess appeared in a dream to Aristarche, whose role is very considerable, both as the required *Hegemon* and as the first priestess of Ephesian Artemis in her new abode. As she carries the *xoanon* from Ephesus under divine instruction we may compare her with Iphigenia, another agent of Artemis, as she carries the *xoanon* of Artemis Tauropolos on a voyage in the other direction, from the margin to the Greek centre in the Aegean. Iphigenia too will establish a cult, at Brauron, while her brother Orestes establishes another nearby at Halae Araphenides. However, we are not told whether Aristarche after death becomes key to ritual concerning childbirth, as does Iphigenia at Brauron. In the case of Aristarche there is more emphasis on beginnings than ends, as her speaking name indicates: she is indeed, a 'Best Beginning', for Massalia and for the cult of Ephesian Artemis there.

Meanwhile, we may well wonder what the people of Ephesus made of all this: the prominence of a man called Aristarchus in Ephesian tradition may suggest a rather uncertain fit with the stories told in the western Mediterranean.<sup>80</sup> Massalia itself has produced no example of the image of its Artemis.<sup>81</sup> However, a Roman image of the Massalian statue appears on late Republican coinage issued by L. Hostilius Saserna, which certainly resembles the familiar statue of the goddess from Ephesus. However, there are differences evident even in this small depiction, most obviously that she lacks the much-discussed breast-like protuberances.<sup>82</sup> As with the handle from Panticapaeum, there was a degree of flexibility within the concept of a copied image: complete precision in all respects was less important, it seems, than the attainment of substantial approximation. At the same time, there was nothing in the Massaliote story, as we have it, to alarm the Ephesians: on the contrary this is an example of the extent of the goddess' cult, in which we know Ephesians to have taken pride.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the story made sense too in Ephesian terms, for, quite apart from the city's ultimate association with dreams through Artemidorus in particular, the location of Artemis' temple on the harbour at Ephesus chimed well with

<sup>79</sup> Further, Malkin (2011) esp. 182–3, 187–8 on Ephesian Artemis and Magnesia.

<sup>80</sup> On Aristarchus, see Dominguez (1999) 80.

<sup>81</sup> A statuette of Ephesia is known from there: Fleischer (1973) E 21.

<sup>82</sup> LiDonnici (1992) 399–400 makes too much of their absence.

<sup>83</sup> Below, p. 121. Pace Arzamonov (1989).

the notion that it was she who had assisted in the foundation of Massalia. Moreover, the story served also to fill a gap in the city's record. For as the generation of colonies became a matter of civic honour, as most obviously in Roman Miletus, Ephesus' lack of her own colonies might seem to be a weakness, even if that had flowed from the city's general prosperity, thanks not least to the goddess. The role of Ephesia in the foundation of Massalia served to fill any such gap.

At the same time, our concern with the colonial hegemon, with Apollo-Artemis and the movement of artefacts, invites thought of the inscribed silver phiale dedicated to the Phasian cult of Apollo Hegemon in the fifth century BC, which we have from a Sarmatian burial up the River Kuban in south Russia, where it was deposited under the Principate. It remains unclear whether the silver dish was ever at Phasis itself and unclear also how it came to be in the Sarmatian burial, though the presence of a prominent snake on its omphalos may help to account for its inclusion among the Sarmatian grave goods. Much has been made of the fact that there is no precise parallel for Apollo as Hegemon, but it has also been stressed that Apollo does appear in kindred guises, for example as Archegetes and Kathegemon. Such terms not only recall the hegemon Aristarche, but also help to show how the Massaliote tradition meshed with the broader matrix of colonial discourse and belief, with Apollo and his sister to the fore.<sup>84</sup>

As for the Etruscan handle-figure dedicated by the mysterious Son, the harsh reality is that we have no idea about its history, but the orthodox and most economical hypothesis has it dedicated to the goddess there, on Mt. Mithridates in the sixth century. If that is right, and it may well be, the handle and its inscription evidence the existence of a cult-place for the goddess there in the later archaic period. However, we need not be detained by arguments that seek to connect a late archaic capital from Hermonassa with the cult of Artemis Ephesia that may be attested in the city some two centuries later (the restored no. 3 above). For there is nothing of substance to link the archaic capital either with Ephesus or with Ephesia.<sup>85</sup>

Far more interesting are fragments of two Athenian cups found separately at Cercinitis: we have their bases, which bear inscriptions dedicating them to Ephesian Artemis. The earlier of these seems to be the glazed base of a black-figure kylix which was made in Athens in the period 480–460 BC, though it is more difficult to give any close date to its deposit later in the century in the heart of Cercinitis.<sup>86</sup> The other is also attributed

<sup>84</sup> Braund (2010a) with bibliography.

<sup>85</sup> Pace Arzamonov (1989).

<sup>86</sup> Kutaisov (1990) 142; cf. (2004) 72. 1; (2015) 49–50; Guldager Bilde (2009).



Figure 8 Dedication to Artemis Ephesia from Cercinitis. © V. A. Kutaisov, Cercinitis archaeological expedition

to the fifth century, but resists closer dating: it was found at the north-east edge of the settlement. These dedications are of the first importance because, apart from the Etruscan handle-figure, they provide our earliest evidence for Artemis Ephesia in the Crimea, albeit outside the Bosporan kingdom. It is especially interesting to see her at Cercinitis: evidently there was room for her and Parthenos there. However, there is no sign of Ephesia in Chersonesus as yet.

Meanwhile, to the west at Berezan we have another indication of the goddess in the fifth century, thanks to the dedication to her of a salt cellar of the period.<sup>87</sup> From Olbia itself (it is claimed) we have fragments of two terracotta statuettes of her familiar image, of which one has been said to come from the fourth century BC, which would make it our second earliest image of the deity in the region (and anywhere else) after the handle-figure from Panticapaeum.<sup>88</sup> This Olbian terracotta shows her famous 'breasts'.<sup>89</sup> However, these images are dated on stylistic grounds rather than archaeological context (the other being regarded as 'late Hellenistic'), so that a close dating is unavailable. Worse, the published museum numbers for these two terracottas do not correspond to anything like the objects described,

<sup>87</sup> Rusyayeva (1992) 106.

<sup>88</sup> Yet another may have been claimed, for the third century BC: conveniently, Guldager Bilde (2009) 306, following the various assertions of Rusyayeva.

<sup>89</sup> Rusyayeva (1982) 78. That might (depending on more precise dating) tell against the view that the goddess's image lacked protuberances before 356 BC: LiDonnici (1992).

so that it is hard to support the claim that one may be of some special importance in chronology or anything else. In effect, these objects are lost: if and when they are found again, we may be able to say rather more.

Finally, we must mention also a fine bronze lamp of East Greek manufacture, which bears an inscription dedicating it to Ephesian Artemis. However, its history is most unclear. It turned up in Moldavia in a hoard of bronze objects (mostly helmets and greaves) found at Oloneshty. It was made in the late archaic period, but the inscription came later: the dedication to Ephesian Artemis seems to have been made rather later, perhaps in the fourth century.<sup>90</sup> Much less clear, however, is the way it came to Oloneshty. The rather romantic notion that the lamp was stolen from the goddess' temple in Ephesus has won a scholarly agreement that is surely unwarranted and not a little surprising.<sup>91</sup> It is much more likely that the lamp had been dedicated to the goddess much nearer to hand, perhaps at Olbia or Tyras and conceivably even in the Bosporus. Epigraphers specialising in the northern Black Sea region now take the view that it was most probably inscribed and so dedicated somewhere there.<sup>92</sup>

The case of Massalia offers a model for understanding the presence of Artemis Ephesia in the Bosporan kingdom and elsewhere on the north coast of the Black Sea without indulging in assumptions about colonial adventures by the people of Ephesus. For the inhabitants of western Asia Minor, Artemis of Ephesus was clearly a major supernatural presence, with a stunning cult-centre to match and express her importance. Artemis of the Ephesians was indeed great. Accordingly, it is hardly a matter for surprise or perturbation when we find indications of her cult among those who came from Ionia to settle in the north Black Sea. There is no indication of the kind of state transferral of the cult, as reported for Massalia, but those who took the brave step of seeking a new life in a strange land might well have found comfort and support in Artemis Ephesia. In any case Artemis was suited to such a role, being the sister of Apollo the founder of cities and a goddess of untamed wilderness in her own right. While there remains unclarity about the particular nature of Ephesia as a deity (in particular as distinct from other forms of Artemis), it is also very clear that her Ephesian self was a focus of power, wealth, success and protection. No surprise, then, if she received a dedication on the acropolis of Panticapaeum in archaic times. While we have no idea about any physical

<sup>90</sup> Yu. G. Vinogradov (1997) 507.

<sup>91</sup> Treister (1999) 85.

<sup>92</sup> Tokhtaš'yev (2005) 9.



construction related to her cult, it would be no shock to find that she even had a temple there. And such a temple has indeed been posited.<sup>93</sup> No doubt the scattering of Ephesians who joined in the colonial process were particularly supportive of her cult in the new colonial environment. As the case of Massalia shows, however, other communities too (Miletus, for example) might embrace Ephesia's cult to bolster the new venture and offer a common focus for the rather disparate and motley communities that emerged through the process of Ionian settlement. It is apparent that Miletus could not herself alone have generated a sufficient surplus of population to establish the many colonies of the Black Sea and elsewhere that called themselves Milesian foundations. The great goddess of Ephesus was exceptionally well suited to be a shared focus for the new communities of people from different cities, largely of Ionia. From archaic Panticapaeum we have only the bronze handle-figure, of course, but the role of Ephesia in the archaic city may well have been much more important than such scanty testimony allows us to argue.

### **The Attractions of Artemis Ephesia in the Bosporus and Beyond**

In the later second century AD, Pausanias tackles head on the question of Ephesia's popularity, and even offers a list of the factors that he took to explain her special attraction:

But all cities worship Artemis of Ephesus, and individuals hold her in honour above all the gods. The reason, in my view, is the renown of the Amazons, who traditionally dedicated the image, also the extreme antiquity of this sanctuary. Three other points as well have contributed to her renown, the size of the temple, surpassing all buildings among men, the eminence of the city of the Ephesians and the renown of the goddess who dwells there. (Paus. 4. 31. 8)

The link with the Amazons is rather surprisingly to the fore.<sup>94</sup> Certainly, Amazons played a substantial and extensive role in myths of foundation around the Greek world, not least in Pausanias' native Asia Minor.<sup>95</sup> They

<sup>93</sup> Rozanova (1960).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Oster (1990) 1720.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Bowie (1986) esp. 28 n. 82 on the relevance of the Amazon named Smyrna to archaic Ephesus. It is unclear how the tradition of the Amazon Smyrna fits, if at all, with the tradition that Ephesus took its name from an Amazon, as reported by Heraclides Lembus, fr. 66f, often wrongly attributed to Heraclides Ponticus. Further, Fleischer (1973) 756; Muss (2008c) 47 on Pliny, *NH* 34. 53 and Amazons in the art of the Artemision in the archaic and classical periods.



represent an antiquity which Pausanias also observes as a factor in Ephesia's popularity in its own right. The evident divergence in detail between different accounts of what precisely Amazons did at the beginning of the cult does not detract from their significance and may even enhance it: here they are responsible for dedicating the statue, while elsewhere for example it is they (not the Kouretes, as Strabo reports) who make the din that keeps the hostile Hera away from her birth (Callimachus, *Hymn to Artemis*, 237ff.). Elsewhere, Pausanias himself illustrates the range of myths connecting Amazons and Ephesus (some as old as Pindar):

The sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma and his oracle are earlier than the immigration of the Ionians, while the cult of Ephesian Artemis is far more ancient still than their coming. Pindar, however, it seems to me, did not learn everything about the goddess, for he says that this sanctuary was founded by the Amazons during their campaign against Athens and Theseus. It is a fact that the women from the Thermodon, as they knew the sanctuary from of old, sacrificed to the Ephesian goddess both on this occasion and when they had fled from Heracles; some of them earlier still, when they had fled from Dionysus, having come to the sanctuary as suppliants. However, it was not by the Amazons that the sanctuary was founded, but by Coresus, an aboriginal, and Ephesus, who is thought to have been a son of the river Cayster, and from Ephesus the city received its name. (Paus. 7. 2. 6–7)

The passage is of particular interest because it asserts the exceptional antiquity of the cult of Ephesia. It is substantially older even than Apollo's cult at Didyma: a suggestive pairing in view of our earlier considerations, while we may note too the potential competition that is latent in Pausanias' remark. Importantly too, Pausanias also shows how the role of the Amazons was imagined as an ongoing relationship, not a single event or act. The Amazons came and came again: in a sense they were still, there, represented in art and statuary. Pausanias often mentions Amazons,<sup>96</sup> indicating not only their significance for the Greek past and present, but probably also his own interest in them as a remarkable phenomenon early in the distant past which carries over into the landscape, monuments and practices of the Roman period. And their various associations with Ephesian Artemis were well known and evidently embraced by the cult itself, so that, for example, Ephesians gave Amazons a role too in the development of the famous asylum at the Artemision (Tac. *Ann.* 3. 61).

Less surprising at 4. 31. 8 is Pausanias' allusion to the general renown of the city, the temple and the goddess as factors in promoting her expansion

<sup>96</sup> Accordingly, modern accounts of Amazons return repeatedly to his work: e.g. Dowden (1997).

among others, among whom of course we must include the Bosporans. At the same time, however, there are also interesting absences from his analysis. First, the fact that he says nothing about Ephesian colonists is some further confirmation that we should not look for an explanation to these largely imaginary folk. Second, we might have expected him to say something about the goddess' role as a protectress, which was clearly of particular importance in her native Ephesus, and was surely transferrable to her other locations too. And yet he is silent on the matter, most probably because other major deities too offered such protection, so that it was not special to Ephesia. We need look no further than Parthenos at Chersonesus. Nor, as Parthenos also illustrates, was Ephesia the only deity who might play an important role in cross-cultural contacts, though we have begun to see how this was indeed a marked aspect of her cult.

Therefore, if we apply the indications offered by Pausanias and our other sources of various periods to the presence of Ephesia in the Bosporus, we soon appreciate that explanation is to be found not in the arrival of Ephesian settlers there (though some are likely enough), but in the nature of the goddess herself. And her sheer fame and importance in the culture of Ionia in particular constituted a large part of that. The Massaliote tradition related by Strabo demonstrates how the goddess might be sought out, accommodated and even given pride of place, among colonists whose origins lay wholly outside Ephesus. For while she was very specifically the goddess of that city, and very special not least in her startling iconography, she was also Artemis, sister of Apollo, the most colonial of Greek deities, whether at Delphi, at Didyma or around the colonial cities themselves. Much of the power and appeal of Ephesian Artemis seems to be located in that dual identity as the shared Artemis and the very localised Ephesia, for that local identity was powerfully redolent of antiquity, prosperity and communal success. Indeed, we hear a great deal about the powers and concerns specifically of this Ephesian form of Artemis, though it is hard to be entirely clear about the development of those powers and the dates at which particular features accrued to her, not least with regard to her more magical powers. However, it is clear that in the challenging environment of a young colony, she was a very valuable deity to have on your side. If she had not played some part in the colonial foundation, she could contribute substantially to the well-being and growth of the community and the families within it. Her prominence in Massaliote tradition is no doubt exceptional: for that reason we do not find her to the fore at Panticapaeum, Olbia or elsewhere, where she did not have that dominant role. However, we have seen enough of her in the scatter of evidence from

Berezan, Olbia, Cercinitis and Panticapaeum to see that she had her place in these colonies. No doubt, as at Massalia too, we should pay particular attention to her bond with Apollo. At Panticapaeum, for example, it is at least interesting that the archaic dedication of the handle-figure occurred in the general vicinity of the city's temple of Apollo.<sup>97</sup>

In later centuries, there was a sense of pride in Ephesus at the spread of its special cult. A public inscription from Ephesus itself, cut in the early 160s and so broadly contemporary with Pausanias, prefaces much rejoicing in the greatness of the deity and her special sacred month with the following assertion:

The goddess Artemis is honoured not only in her own homeland ... but also among Greeks and non-Greeks, so that everywhere her sacred rites and precincts are established and her temples and altars are to be seen. (IK Ephesos 1a. 24B)

This kind of civic pride is familiar enough, not least in the second century AD. We find it expressed in a range of different ways from city to city. At Miletus, for example, the remarkable record of the city's extensive colonisation around the world is repeatedly recalled as a mark of similar civic pride. However, each city naturally plays to its strengths in the general rivalry for civic reputation. The silence of the Ephesians on overseas settlement (especially by contrast with the Milesians) serves once more to illustrate their lack of a substantial colonialist past. For the Ephesians it was the expansion of their special cult of Artemis across the world that mattered. Indeed, some have even sensed a form of missionary zeal among the Ephesians. Certainly we never hear that the city was averse to the embracing of Artemis Ephesia, by Greeks and non-Greeks alike.<sup>98</sup> In this regard, Xenophon's autobiographical account of his taking the cult of Artemis Ephesia from Ephesus to Greece in the fourth century BC repays close attention. It is all the more interesting in that Xenophon's actions and his account of those actions stand close in time to the cluster of inscriptions on stone concerning Ephesian Artemis which we observed in the Bosporan kingdom.

Xenophon tells us<sup>99</sup> that when the survivors of the great adventure to put Cyrus on the Persian throne had declared their expedition at an end by taking stock of their numbers and gathering the proceeds of the sale into slavery of their numerous captives and other booty, a tithe was set

<sup>97</sup> On late archaic remnants, see Tolstikov (2010).

<sup>98</sup> Oster (1990) 1703–5.

<sup>99</sup> *Anab.* 5. 3. 2–4.

aside for Apollo and Ephesian Artemis. That was placed in the charge of the generals, each taking a share of what was evidently a large sum. Over 8,000 men had survived, and each will have sold his own stock of booty. As we shall see, Xenophon was able to do a lot with his share of a mere tenth of the huge amount raised. This was the end of the adventure, but the army had only reached Cerasus, east of Sinope, its mother city, in what Xenophon considered still to be Colchis. The end was far from complete: there was still a long way to go to reach Byzantium, let alone Greece proper. Meanwhile, the army's choice of deities has occasioned comment, and the suspicion that Xenophon may be misleading us: did the army at Cerasus really focus so sharply on Apollo and Artemis Ephesia? Of course, the problem in answering that question is our lack of any information beyond what Xenophon himself tells us. The question may stand, but there is no strange reason to think that Xenophon's description of events is inaccurate. The martial aspects of Apollo and Artemis have been set out in this regard.<sup>100</sup> We have already seen, too, ample evidence of the broad attraction of Ephesian Artemis in particular. It must also be important that Ephesus was readily seen as the starting-point for the great expedition, where Ephesia is likely to have been involved from the first. Cyrus had mustered his forces for the great expedition at Sardis (Xen. *Anab.* 1. 1. 2–5).<sup>101</sup> Ephesia was important at Sardis, where she seems to have been associated also with Apollo.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, it seems quite understandable that the army in Cerasus, at the 'end' of an expedition that had begun in Sardis, saw fit to give a tithe of its gains to those very deities. In all probability, the departure of the expedition had been marked by some religious act involving those very deities too, though we hear nothing of that.

Xenophon himself was clearly in sympathy with the decision to honour these deities. While Xenophon's particular concern during the expedition was Zeus Basileus, he tells us that it was the oracle of Apollo at Delphi that had recommended him to look to Zeus the King (*Anab.* 6. 1. 22). Therefore, he satisfied both his duty to the army and his own allegiances when he used some of his portion of the tithe to make a dedication at Delphi, bearing his own name and that of his dead friend, the general Proxenos (*Anab.* 5. 3. 5). Meanwhile, his dealings with Ephesia also entailed a personal element from the first. For Xenophon's beloved Agesilaus had

<sup>100</sup> Tuplin (2004).

<sup>101</sup> *Anab.* 2. 2. 6 gives the distance from Ephesus to the battlefield at Cunaxa, but the passage is regularly regarded as an interpolation.

<sup>102</sup> Munn (2006) 166–7 with key inscriptions.

bestowed significant patronage on the Artemision at Ephesus, where Xenophon had accompanied him.<sup>103</sup> When suddenly Xenophon went with Agesilaus back to the Corinthian War in Greece, he chose to deposit his portion of the tithe there in the Artemision with instructions about what to do with the money in the event of his death:

for the reason that his own journey seemed likely to be a dangerous one; and his instructions were that in case he should escape with his life, the money was to be returned to him, but in case any ill should befall him, Megabyzus was to cause to be made and dedicated to Artemis whatever offering he thought would please the goddess. (Xen. *Anab.* 5. 3. 8)

Of course, he survived, and was delighted when the Megabyzus<sup>104</sup> came to Olympia with his money. Among Xenophon's fellow Athenians this warden priest of the Artemision at Ephesus was already a byword for wealth and luxury by the middle of the fifth century or so. By virtue of this office and perhaps also their individual characters, those who were Megabyzus seem to have been larger-than-life individuals.<sup>105</sup> According to Xenophon's own account of his actions (*Anab.* 5. 3. 9ff.), it was the return of this money that prompted his decision to use it to create his own smaller version of the cult at Ephesus. Rather as with the dedication at Delphi, this was to be his personal stamp on the duty given him by the army at Cerasus, which he after all helped to formulate. We may well suspect that the Megabyzus played a part in this reproduction for his Artemision, though Xenophon does not say that he did.<sup>106</sup> First he bought a suitable plot, which was indicated by an oracle of Apollo, appropriately again. We may recall too the story from Massalia, in which Apollo gave instructions to foundation involving Ephesia. In this case too there was to be a strong element of reproduction. For the topography of the spot recalled the site of the Ephesian Artemision, even down to the name of the river there, Selinus. Then he set about a temple, cult-statue and an appropriate festival, which brought within celebratory feasting both the game to be caught in Artemis' favourite pastime of hunting and the domesticated

<sup>103</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 3. 4. 7, with Tuplin (2004) 253.

<sup>104</sup> The priesthood is a conundrum: Oster (1990) 1721–2; Burkert (1999) 68.

<sup>105</sup> Crates, fr. 37 KA; Aelian, *VH* 2. 2 has an anecdote entailing Zeuxis' advice to a Megabyzus who was resplendent in his clothing and entourage.

<sup>106</sup> Bremmer (2008) gathers the evidence for the Megabyzus (much being comic), or Megabyxus, and suggests that he did more than convey the money to Olympia, where he attended the Games, perhaps in 384 B.C. Cf. I.Priene 3 for money-handling by a successor in the priesthood, fifty years later. The priesthood was abolished under Augustus.

meat to be found on the lands Xenophon had bought for her, which was also the locus of some of the hunting:

Here Xenophon built an altar and a temple with the sacred money, and from that time forth he would every year take the tithe of the products of the land in their season and offer sacrifice to the goddess, all the citizens and the men and women of the neighbourhood taking part in the festival. And the goddess would provide for the banqueters barley meal and loaves of bread, wine and sweetmeats, and a portion of the sacrificial victims from the sacred herd as well as of the victims taken in the chase. For Xenophon's sons and the sons of the other citizens used to have a hunting expedition at the time of the festival, and any grown men who so wished would join them; and they captured their game partly from the sacred precinct itself and partly from Mount Pholoe – boars and gazelles and stags.

The place is situated on the road which leads from Sparta to Olympia, and is about twenty stadia from the temple of Zeus at Olympia. Within the sacred precinct there is meadowland and tree-covered hills, suited for the rearing of pigs, goats, cattle and horses, so that even the draught animals which bring people to the festival have their feast also. Immediately surrounding the temple is a grove of cultivated trees, producing all sorts of dessert fruits in their season.

The temple itself is like the one at Ephesus, although small as compared with great, and the image of the goddess, although cypress wood as compared with gold, is like the Ephesian image. Beside the temple stands a plaque with this inscription: 'The place is sacred to Artemis. He who holds it and enjoys its fruits must offer the tithe every year in sacrifice, and from the remainder must keep the temple in repair. If any one leaves these things undone, the goddess will look to it.' (Xen. *Anab.* 5. 3. 9–13)

Our close knowledge of the workings of the cult at Ephesus is imperfect, especially for this period, but it seems clear enough that Xenophon had sought (in his own version of events) to reproduce in Elis the goddess' cult at Ephesus. So much so that his account may reasonably be taken, with all due caution, to provide insight into what happened at Ephesus in the earlier fourth century BC, particularly in view of the fact that its details echo what we happen to know from Ephesus in different periods.<sup>107</sup> For example, his apparently insignificant mention of the fish in the river by which he built the temple (*Anab.* 5. 3. 8) seems to be made to recall the fish from which the Ephesian prototype made great profits.<sup>108</sup> The topographical correspondence was remarkable, as befitted a location shown by Apollo.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. e.g. Portefaix (1999); Oster (1990) 1708–11; cf. Rogers (1991).

<sup>108</sup> Strabo 14. 1. 26; cf. Oster (1990) 1719.

However, Xenophon omits all mention of the goddess' mysteries, and he also says nothing of the female cultic officials who would have been required for their performance. Conceivably these were not part of his version of the cult, but their absence would seem to render his whole undertaking rather kitsch. They are not mentioned by Strabo at Massalia either, but there we do find a prominent priestess, Aristarche herself. It is to be noted that our information about mysteries even at Ephesus is rather slight,<sup>109</sup> so that we should perhaps not make too much of Xenophon's silence. After all, mysteries were not to be written about,<sup>110</sup> and without them priestesses were not especially interesting: in any case, Xenophon shows scant interest in the officials at his temple, beyond his sons, who look like the Curetes at Ephesus.<sup>111</sup> There they had a major role in festival for the goddess and are said by Strabo to have performed 'secret sacrifices' (Strabo 14. 1. 20), but there is no sign that they might fulfil the functions of a priestess, at least not before the rather different arrangements at Ephesus under the Principate, when they seem to become involved with some mysteries.<sup>112</sup> A careful survey of the evidence (largely epigraphic) produces a substantial list of office-holders in the Artemision. But it does not tell us much at all about what these people actually did.<sup>113</sup> It seems that the cult at Ephesus – and so presumably in the Peloponnese and elsewhere – was served especially by (young?) males and unmarried females, as is made explicit in the novel of Achilles Tatius, as well as the eunuch Megabyzus, whose office seems to have ended under Augustus. As for unmarried women, it is noteworthy that in the Massaliote story there is no sign that Aristarche had a husband, while the whole logic of Hera's role in the cult-myth is that married women were at odds with at least aspects of the cult, even though they clearly participated in its festivals, as Xenophon's version serves to illustrate. All of these issues concern the Bosphorus too, where we have inscribed evidence of what seem to be young and unmarried priestesses. If the cult in the Bosphorus followed the organisational pattern of the Artemision in Ephesus, as that in Massalia seems to have done, then we probably have here holders of the office of virgin priestess, like the individuals who held such an office and presided over cult-practice at Ephesus. The office seems to have been annual, at least under the Principate, though

<sup>109</sup> Oster (1990) 1711–13.

<sup>110</sup> Further, Cosmopoulos (2003).

<sup>111</sup> They are firmly attested at Ephesus at the end of the fourth century BC: IK Ephesos 1449) with Graf (1999) 257 on their political and economic roles.

<sup>112</sup> At the Prytaneion: Graf (1999) 256–7 highlights change in the cult's personnel.

<sup>113</sup> Oster (1990) esp. 1722, acknowledging the problem.

we should observe that other females seem to have occupied junior roles too. Our information leaves many a question.<sup>114</sup>

Clearly, Xenophon's relationship with Ephesian Artemis turned on the deposit and safe return of his money, even delivered to him in the Peloponnese by the Megabyzus, whose readiness to travel as far as Olympia indicates that the journeying of priests from Ephesus may have contributed something to the spread of Ephesia's cult. Again, we may compare the story of Aristarche, who journeyed from Ephesus to become priestess at Massalia. Meanwhile, it has also been argued that the banking functions of the Artemision at Ephesus played a significant part in the spread of its cult.<sup>115</sup> Certainly, Xenophon constitutes a good example of such a process. Money was fundamental. However, there was evidently more to Xenophon's interest in Ephesia than money-handling, for that alone was hardly enough to explain his decision carefully to reproduce her cult in the Peloponnese as a miniature version of the Ephesian prototype. Perhaps most important was Ephesia's role, with Apollo, in getting Xenophon and his army out of their impossible position after Cunaxa.

As usual, Xenophon presents himself in the best possible light. His account of the inscribed plaque is surely disingenuous in the sense that it fails to indicate that it was Xenophon who had done all this. Instead the plaque contains general rules applicable to proper conduct at the cult. However, we may be sure that Xenophon's pious generosity was made explicit at the site, even if it is left unspoken – and yet demonstrated – in the *Anabasis*. The Bosphoran inscriptions on stone show no such reticence, and it is unlikely that Xenophon's creation did either. His sons were Curetes. And if we ask who was the Peloponnesian Megabyzus, there is really only one candidate, namely Xenophon himself, who had financed and created the whole affair.

The strong sense of reproduction that seems to surround the cult of Ephesia tends to suggest that we should imagine her cult in the Bosphorus also to replicate the Ephesian model, at least to some significant extent. Rather less clear is whether that also meant Ephesus' exercise of authority over its replicas, whether in the Bosphorus, at Massalia or elsewhere. Certainly, the goddess' epithet projected the cult as belonging at, and perhaps belonging to, the city of Ephesus and the Artemision there.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Bremmer (2008) makes a compelling case for there being a single high priestess (probably annually), like Aristarche at Massalia. It remains unclear how her activities meshed with those of the Megabyzus, or the other priestesses whom we rarely glimpse.

<sup>115</sup> Burkert (1999); cf. Oster (1990) 1717–19 and, more generally, Dignas (2002).

<sup>116</sup> Oster (1990) 1705.



The Bosphoran dedications of the fourth century at Panticapaeum, Hermonassa and Gorgippia indicate that Ephesia's initial presence in the colonial world of the northern Black Sea had developed into what are evidently civic cults, complete with priesthoods, albeit perhaps not with the elaborate superstructure known from the Artemision at Ephesus. It seems that those priesthoods were held by women, while the dedications seem also to have been made by and/or for women, at least in large part (we are hampered by lacunae). The presence of priestesses strengthens the likelihood that Ephesia's mysteries were celebrated fully in the Bosphorus too, for this was key to their functions.<sup>117</sup> No Megabyzus is visible there: such a position may have existed only at the dominant centre of the cult, in Ephesus. Of course, we have insufficient knowledge to trace the development of Bosphoran Ephesia from archaic times down to the fourth century, but we may observe that her attractions in the colonial world not only survived but evidently grew thereafter and became established in civic religion over this period. And that tends to confirm that explanations of her arrival on the north coast of the Black Sea reside not in unattested Ephesians, but in the cult itself. Even so, it would be good to know whether any of Xenophon's army moved on to the Bosphorus after Cerasus to give a fresh impulse, perhaps, to a cult which was already strong enough.

We must consider too the potential impact of the burning of her temple at Ephesus in 356 BC and the celebration of its reconstruction. Thanks to Macrobius we can glimpse the great Ephesian effort in this regard for he tells us that a Hellenistic poet, Alexander the Aetolian, wrote of the Ephesians' concern to attract all the best poets of the day to compose for the event and perform there: lavish prizes were offered, while the event must also have received maximum publicity to ensure the strongest set of participants.<sup>118</sup> The clamour surrounding the conflagration of 356 BC and its aftermath can only have given extra energy and topical relevance to her cult in the Bosphorus and elsewhere. At the same time, the fact that the Artemision at Ephesus was itself a topic for writers must also be understood as contributing significantly to the renown of the cult, remarked upon by Pausanias as a cause of its popularity.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Oster (1990) 1711.

<sup>118</sup> Macrobius *Sat.* 5. 22. 4; cf. IK Ephesos 4328 (Augustan period).

<sup>119</sup> For these works on the Artemision, see Athenaeus 12. 525c; Diog. Laert. *Democritus* 49; Vitruv. 7. praef. 12; cf. Paus. 4. 31. 8 on its wondrousness, with Oster (1990) 1715.

### Conclusions

Thanks to Herodotus' remarks on Croesus, we see the goddess and her temple as central to the protection of Ephesus from quite early (Hdt. 1. 26). Protection was also inherent in the Massaliote tradition of a civic foundation guided by Ephesia, clearly in concert with her brother, Apollo (Delphinios). Where we see the goddess in action, her brother and her mother Leto, are often not far away. We may recall that it was Apollo who told Xenophon where to site his Peloponnesian version of the Ephesian Artemision, his own 'wonder of the world' in miniature. And we have seen how Ephesians had their own version of Leto's birth, embedded in noisy ritual there. At that initial moment, it was Ephesia who needed protection and who received it at Ephesus. Meanwhile, the protective power of the goddess (with and without her family) made her temple all the more effective and credible as a financial store and institution: Xenophon had good reason to expect his money to be safe in the Artemision, all the more important in a world where such a place of safety was hard to find. And that power to offer protection and safety was expressed very clearly in the famous asylum that was respected in the temple at Ephesus. The Roman idea of limiting that right was received with such outrage precisely because protection was so key to the cult of the goddess in Ephesus and probably elsewhere besides. At the same time the city's outraged response to Rome was the fierce assertion of traditional privilege (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 3. 61). A sense of the sheer self-confidence of the institution and its representatives emerges very strongly from that encounter. It is clear again, a century or so later, in the Ephesian response to a Roman governor of Asia under Marcus Aurelius, who had evidently been so unwise as to conduct business at the time of the goddess' festival when the cult of Ephesia demanded holiday. The Ephesians were outraged once again: we have the governor's subsequent reassertion of these holidays and profuse expression of his piety towards the goddess and respect for the honour of her city (IK Ephesos 24A). As usual, we see Ephesus and the cult of Ephesia working closely together. Of course, this was the ordered world of the second century AD, but we should not imagine any less committed a championing of the cult at Ephesus at other times too. This has been called the 'covenant bond' between the cult and the city, whereby in their different ways each protected the other.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>120</sup> The phrase is that of Oster (1990) 1700.

As Cyrus' army marched off from Sardis eastwards, there was probably ritual to mark the beginning of their great enterprise, as we have argued, involving Ephesia and her brother, Apollo. Despite the failure of their mission, the substantial majority of the Greek mercenaries involved survived, so that they set aside a tithe of their booty for these same deities. The episode nicely illustrates how divine protection might also be divine support in a great undertaking. Much the same may be said of the Massaliote tradition which brought Ephesia (and again Apollo) to the fore both for protection and for a more proactive role in their mission to create a new city at the other end of the Mediterranean. The similarity amounts to a further instance of the colonialist evocations of Xenophon's adventure. However, such adventures were far from being the only significant undertaking that might benefit from the goddess' support. Herodotus' account of Croesus' dealings with Ephesia shows his generosity to her cult as being followed by his rise to kingship and his famously extraordinary wealth. There is a suspicion of causation here, that Croesus had prospered not only after his generosity to Ephesia but also because of it, that he had thereby gained the support of Ephesia, who was the cause of his prosperity. At least, the cult's connection with Croesus was certainly a formative feature of the great renown that Ephesia and her Artemision came to enjoy, as is set out by Pausanias and is also clear to see throughout our evidence.

Once all that has been understood, we may appreciate how and why Ephesian Artemis was attractive in colonial environments at the periphery of the Greek world, whether in the far west at Massalia or in the Black Sea region, where Amazons too had a special place. The active and protective power of the goddess was especially desirable in the challenging new environment, while we have seen also that Ephesia was particularly strong in offering security for property. This was a cult which could offer a valuable focus for the new community, bringing together Ionians from different cities in particular, while perhaps maintaining active linkage to the Artemision at Ephesus. This was also a cult which was cross-cultural in a broader sense too, including non-Greeks, as the Ephesians evidently liked to stress, at least in the Roman period. That rare combination of focus and inclusivity was particularly valuable in a young colony, where, for example, women were obtained locally. The settlement was unlikely to prosper without the construction and maintenance of positive relationships with at least a portion of the native, non-Greek populations of the new homeland. Ephesian Artemis was experienced with non-Greeks, while her powers of attack and defence were available when relationships soured. At the same time, her powers with regard to the natural world – familiar too with

other forms of Artemis – were also invaluable in a colonial setting, where nature might well look rather different. Even Xenophon's arrangements illustrate how the goddess' protection included also the management of nature and the provision of food, through hunting and domestic supply. Hellenistic coinage, *inter alia*, confirms in its iconography that Ephesian Artemis was interested in hunting, like Artemis more generally of course.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, if we take seriously arguments about her astral significance, we might see a very practical aspect too in the Massaliote tradition: her agent and future priestess – Aristarche, with the *aphidruma* – had guided the great Phocaeen voyage to Massalia. However, the commonplace notion that Ephesia was a fertility goddess is unsatisfactory, for the notion turns upon Christian polemic which also erroneously characterised the protuberances on her image as a mass of breasts. It has been well observed that in the rest of the tradition there is a deafening silence about fertility in her regard.<sup>122</sup> No doubt her concern to protect did include the assurance of an adequate food supply, but that hardly marks her out as a goddess of fertility.

We have observed the strong sense of repetition and reproduction around the cult, including its statue and its occupation of the landscape (where Apollo the founder plays a role). Not only does Massalia take a copy of the statue from Ephesus in Ephesus (according to the tradition at least), but it also seems to reproduce the details of her cult there, including the topography of the place in which her temple is positioned.<sup>123</sup> As Malkin has helpfully observed in explaining the term that expresses this reproduction (*aphidruma*), 'its primary functional meaning is a sacred object used to begin and found a new cult, perceived as a subsidiary branch of an older cult'.<sup>124</sup> The *aphidruma* from among the sacred objects at Ephesus was not necessarily a copy or reproduction of the cult-statue in a literal sense, though it might have been: it was a sacred object which served to convey the cult from Ephesus to Massalia.<sup>125</sup> Accordingly, there is nothing remarkable in the fact that the Massaliote cult-statue looks rather different from Ephesian statues that we know, not least in its lack of 'breasts'. And that key observation further shows the importance of Aristarche in the Massaliote story, for it is she who chooses what to take as an *aphidruma*

<sup>121</sup> Further, Oster (1990) 1726. The notably static posture of her statue seems not to be problematic in this regard.

<sup>122</sup> Oster (1990) 1725–6.

<sup>123</sup> See further Anguissola (2006) on Strabo's use of *aphidruma*.

<sup>124</sup> Malkin (1991) 78.

<sup>125</sup> Malkin (1991) 79–80.

from among the Ephesian sacred objects, a crucial part of her hegemony. Thereafter, the process of reproduction continues into a further stage when the cult is repeatedly placed again in Massalia's own colonies. In this way we see the centre of the cult, at Ephesus, reaching out across the Mediterranean, but also retaining (at least substantially) its Ephesian form. We can only wonder how far the Megabyzus at Ephesus and the rest of the apparatus of officials there may have maintained contact with (and even a measure of control over) these multiplying outposts of Ephesia. The fact that the Megabyzus travelled to Olympia also opens the question of his other travels. There is no particular reason to think that he travelled to the Bosporan kingdom, but there is no reason either to rule out such a journey in the context of the development of Ephesia's cult there.

In view of this strong sense of reproduction and perhaps ongoing contact with the centre at Ephesus, steeped in renown and powerful antiquity, there is every reason to infer that in the Bosporan kingdom too the cult of Artemis Ephesia sought to follow the structures and practices of its great counterpart at Ephesus. Rather as with Xenophon's contemporary initiative in the Peloponnese, there is every reason to suppose that the cult in the Bosporus shared the same festivals and mysteries as were in use at Ephesus, perhaps also seeking to reproduce the topography of the Ephesian cult as far as local circumstances permitted. All these considerations tend to confirm that the statue dedicated to the goddess at Panticapaeum, for which we have only the base (CIRB 11), looked very much like the static, frontal image of the goddess that we see repeated elsewhere. Indeed, there is a static look even to the simple handle-image, for all its parted legs. The presence of the latter on the acropolis at Panticapaeum is not enough to support the notion that Ephesia had her own temple there. Such an object could travel easily and, as we have noted, it might have been in the process of recycling.<sup>126</sup> However, we have seen enough of the powers of Ephesia to encourage the suspicion that the dedicant Son was or had been engaged in some special undertaking. If we are right to suspect that he had a Rhodian connection, the voyage alone might have been enough, while any kind of trade activity would suit his decision to make a dedication to a goddess whose wealth was key to her reputation and practice. The altar of Ephesia (CIRB 6a) is our only firm indication of any physical structure for her cult in the Bosporan kingdom. Its reported find spot on the outskirts of Kerch tends to suggest an extra-urban location, rather like that of Xenophon's

<sup>126</sup> On metalworking there, Blavatskiy (1962) 25 and above p. 106.

Artemision.<sup>127</sup> A priestess may well have made the dedication, like the priestess who certainly dedicated CIRB 1040, whether to Ephesia or Agrotera. We have seen that the Bosphoran evidence is limited and fraught with lacunae and other difficulties. However, when taken together with the replication that seems to characterise Ephesia's cult, we should provisionally take her high priestess to have presided over its Bosphoran version, most probably a young unmarried female in office for a year.

The attractions of Ephesia in the early years of Greek settlement applied too in the fourth century BC. That was also a century of notable prosperity in the Bosphorus, as illustrated by the expansion of the Bosphoran civic territory and the availability of surpluses sufficient repeatedly to feature prominently in the grain-supply of Athens and other communities also. This was a time at which the kingdom was reaching out to the Greek world at large, while also bringing its broader culture into the Bosphorus. It was not only the cult of Artemis Ephesia that benefited from this period of prosperity and openness. It suffices to observe that it was in these years too that stone theatres were constructed in the Bosphorus and a star like Stratoniceus was brought there to perform in them.<sup>128</sup>

Finally, while we see Ephesian Artemis in the Bosphorus in the late archaic period and again in the fourth century BC, we are left to imagine what may have occurred there in the fifth century. The most probable hypothesis is that the cult continued to be celebrated, as at Cercinitis, but the lack of evidence allows no confidence about how or how extensively. As we have seen, the prosperity which financed the stone dedications to the goddess in the Bosphorus in the fourth century coincided with something of a fashion for Ephesia, perhaps encouraged by the grand political changes that were taking place in Asia Minor, in which Xenophon had played a part. Artemis Ephesia had flourished under Lydian and Persian suzerainty, but it is not unlikely that the prospect of enhanced independence for the city of Ephesus in the face of a changing Achaemenid authority – through Greek adventures in Asia after the Peloponnesian War, the relatively benevolent reign of Artaxerxes II and ultimately the campaigns of Alexander the Great – had been explained by some as the workings of the deity herself. Certainly the Magi who witnessed the conflagration of 356 BC are said to have seen in it a sign of disaster for Persian control in Asia, that is the birth of Alexander.<sup>129</sup> Here, once again, we see the goddess shared

<sup>127</sup> On Artemis in the landscape, see esp. Morizot (1994).

<sup>128</sup> Further, Braund and Hall (2014).

<sup>129</sup> Plut. *Alexander* 3. 5–7, noting also other connections made between Alexander and the deity.

and interpreted across cultures, not only by the city of Ephesus or by Greeks more generally but by Persians too, as by other 'barbarians'. The Bosporan concern with the goddess must be understood too in that larger framework, for Bosporans too clearly wished to share in the deity in all its ancient and powerful greatness. For the developing Bosphorus, reaching out to the wider world, Ephesia offered another kind of linkage with the cultures of Greeks, Persians and others besides.

The great puzzle, however, which seems not to have troubled scholars much or at all, is that we see nothing of Ephesian Artemis in the Bosphorus after the fourth century BC. In the very years when we see her so often extending across Asia Minor, she is nowhere to be found in the Bosphorus. And that absence is all the more remarkable when we consider also the relatively large body of inscriptions that we have from the Bosphorus for the Roman period. No explanation is available for this strange 'end' of the cult in the Bosphorus during its acme elsewhere. Possibly this is no more than a quirk of the evidence and we are simply faced with the consequences of the happenstance of survival and loss. However, the existence of another important cult of Artemis there may have some bearing. For nowhere do we hear anything of the relationship between Artemis of Ephesus and the cult of Parthenos which was so important at Chersonesus and across the Crimea. Also relevant may well be the cult of Aphrodite Ourania, which was very strong and central to Bosporan life under the Principate.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, there is also the development of the cult of Isis that we see at the time when our evidence for Ephesia stops. Unfortunately, however, the interaction of these cults in the Bosphorus, as more generally, is beyond our knowledge. And it remains very strange that Ephesia simply disappears from the record at the end of the fourth century BC. It is to be hoped that future discoveries – especially of inscriptions – will improve our understanding.

<sup>130</sup> Ephesian Artemis might also be Ourania, albeit exceptionally: TAM III 1. 390 (Teressus in Pisidia).

## CHAPTER 4

### *Bosporan Isis*

It was in the Hellenistic world of the Ptolemies of Egypt that the cult of Isis became established as a significant part of Greek religion. Her cult and others closely associated with it (especially that of Serapis) had their origins in Egypt, but, as they found places in the changing Greek environment, these cults too ceased to be simply Egyptian.<sup>1</sup> We may wonder how early the idea emerged that Isis and her consort Osiris were in fact Greek, as Plutarch felt able to assert c. AD 100.<sup>2</sup> That was an extreme position, no doubt, and went with the quite different tendency among Greeks and Romans to stress alienation from Egyptian religion.<sup>3</sup> However, there seem always to have been Greeks ready to embrace Isis, as we shall see. Subsequently, under the Ptolemies (as with the regime of these Macedonian rulers in Egypt as a whole) her cult became part of the massive process of cultural osmosis that we know as the Hellenistic world. This was a fusion (indeed an array of fusions) that had been caused by the pathbreaking victories that had taken Alexander from the Balkans to the Indus and then left his generals to devise kingdoms for themselves after his sudden death in 323 BC. In Egypt Ptolemy I, both a general and a man of letters, established a remarkable regime which brought together Greek culture and the culture of a Pharaonic Egypt which had been part of the Persian empire in recent centuries, albeit unsteadily at times. However, his innovative regime was also a continuation of an extended history of Greek–Egyptian interaction which went back much further, as Greeks themselves recognised, deep into the prehistoric world of Minoan Crete and beyond.

The consequences were considerable: for example, even as the archaic period gets under way Isis' influence might be imagined in the cult of

<sup>1</sup> Further, Malaise (2007).

<sup>2</sup> On the name: Plut. *De Is.* 351f; on Plutarch's attempt to appropriate these deities, Richter (2001) with much earlier bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Juvenal, *Satire* 14, with earlier Greek texts gathered by Simms (1989).



Demeter at Eleusis.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, while there was always potential for alienation, Greeks included Egypt in their own mythology, where the world of the Nile and its gods were seldom very far away. Herodotus' extraordinary account of Egypt, given a whole book of his *Histories*, exemplifies that broad Greek sense of familiar strangeness and fascination with regard to Egyptian religion and religious ideas well before the Ptolemies. Thereafter, it was comfortable enough for Greeks not only to associate their gods with Egyptian counterparts, but also to embrace Egyptian gods within the religion of the developing Hellenistic world, especially in view of the military and economic ambition and success of Egypt's new Macedonian rulers after 323.

Well before the Ptolemies, the Bosporan kingdom and Scythia had formed an intriguing counterpoint with Egypt and neighbouring Libya, not least in Herodotus' conception of the history and geography of his past and present. The antiquity of Egypt was matched by the newness of Scythia, the burning south by the freezing north. While Scythians represented themselves as the youngest of peoples, in contrast to ancient Egypt, the Bosporan kingdom too was no part of Greek antiquity of the distant past. This was a colonial space, regarded as empty before Scythians and then Greeks arrived through the archaic period. Certainly, the landscape of the region might be included in Greek mythology, as with Prometheus on his crag in or near Scythia or the wanderings of Io. And there was some room in the Greek imagination for northern peoples who were not Scythian, such as the Taurians and other inhospitable folk, or pre-Scythians, notably the Cimmerians, whose story brought together Homer and the Francois Vase<sup>5</sup> with the origins of locations of the north Black Sea and the foundations of cities in Asia Minor, whither the Scythians were said to have driven them. However, in Greek eyes, the steppe of the north was also a cultural desert, even despite the Bosporan kingdom's commitment to the pursuit and promotion of Greek culture.<sup>6</sup> For Herodotus, Scythia might have features which compared with the creations of Egypt, such as the burial-mounds that showed some resemblance to Egyptian pyramids, but the very comparison served only to highlight further for Greeks of the Mediterranean the relative primitiveness of the northern Black Sea. Herodotus observes how the rivers here are its great wonder, to an extent

<sup>4</sup> Esp. an Isis statuette in one of the richest graves at Geometric Eleusis, perhaps of a priestess of Demeter: Coldstream (2003) 79–80, noting also her lunate earrings.

<sup>5</sup> On the Francois Vase, where a named archer evokes Cimmerians, see Shapiro, Iozzo and Lezzi-Hafter (2013).

<sup>6</sup> Braund and Hall (2014): note esp. Stratonicus' typically scornful view, as told by Athenaeus.

comparable with the Nile, but in so doing he again averts his gaze away from human culture there to the wonders of local nature. Egypt, meanwhile, was replete with knowledge that was rooted in antiquity at least as great as that of Greeks, with a political organisation and military might to match. Accordingly, while Greeks might establish themselves in Egypt, this was never an empty colonial space. The land of Egypt had been taken long before archaic Greeks arrived. And Isis already had her place there.

As we begin to consider Isis in the Bosporan kingdom, therefore, we bridge a major divide, both in terms of different Greek perceptions of Egypt and the north and also with regard to the history of Greek interactions with the two areas and the ongoing consequences of those different histories. In the north itself, while Scythians seem to have been untroubled by Greek notions of their youth and cultural underdevelopment, the Greeks of the region – with the Bosporans to the fore – strove to establish the bona fides of their Greekness and the validity of their claims to a place in Greek mythology, including the landscape, but also seeking more than that. Meanwhile, in the course of these large processes, and with the developing Hellenistic world around, the Ptolemies and Bosporan rulers formed their own very particular bonds. Both kingdoms had a reputation as grain-exporters, which was valuable in diplomacy as well as any larger economic concern, no doubt. We shall see how it was the encounter of Bosporan cultural ambition through and beyond the Black Sea with Ptolemaic imperialism in that same theatre<sup>7</sup> that formed the principal underpinning of the growing concern with Isis in the Crimea and its environs. Certainly, the cult of Isis never became a large part of Bosporan religion. However, its development in the region illustrates these processes very well, while also providing further insight into the goddesses of the Bosphorus, not least Artemis and Aphrodite. For we shall see that there were many Greek deities to be found in Isis.

### **Demeter and Argive Io: Herodotus and the Many Greek Faces of Isis**

In his long account of Egypt, Herodotus tends to oversimplify the relationship between Greek and Egyptian deities by presenting their respective pantheons in terms of identification and equivalence. On his schema, Isis is Demeter (Hdt. 2. 56 and 156). No doubt it was Isis' particular association with the grain-harvest, regularly indicated in her iconography, as well as

<sup>7</sup> See Marquaille (2008); cf. Buraselis, Stefanou and Thompson (2013) with full bibliography.

her further associations with motherhood and agricultural fertility more generally, that suggested her identification with Demeter.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Herodotus also states that it was from Egypt that the daughters of Danaus first brought Demeter's festival of the Thesmophoria to Greece, which returns us to the Isis statuette at late geometric Eleusis (Hdt. 2. 171). Moreover, Herodotus was by no means alone in bringing together Isis and Demeter. For example, a handful of images have survived which duly show a deity who seems to be both Isis and Demeter.<sup>9</sup> In addition to their shared concern with fertility and agriculture, there was a certain parallelism too between Isis' search for the murdered Osiris, her brother-husband, and Demeter's search for her daughter, Kore-Persephone, who had been abducted to the Underworld by Hades. Once again, however, similarity clearly coexists with substantial difference.

Before complaining of Herodotus' apparently simple-minded syncretism of Isis and Demeter, we must appreciate that his blunt identifications are frequently accompanied also by a set of myths converted into Greek terminology from Egyptian accounts. These attendant myths immediately reveal also the inherent complexity of Herodotus' blunt identifications, as well as his own awareness of that complexity. His bold assertions of equivalence provided his Greek audience with a strong sense of the Egyptian deity's identity (e.g. that Isis was Demeter), while his forays into Egyptian mythology made very clear at the same time that this was not the Demeter of Greek religion in any straightforward or all-embracing sense. One suspects that such elasticity was much less disturbing in a world of polytheism that was replete with local and variant notions of divinity than it can be in a modern library. As for Isis, Herodotus immediately problematises her identification as an Egyptian Demeter by asserting that this is a Demeter who is mother of Artemis and Apollo, and that the father was Dionysus, himself alias Osiris (2. 156). There can be no doubt that Herodotus appreciated how problematic such a family tree would seem to his Greek audience, which in turn shows clearly enough his awareness that this is a world of divinities that does not map onto Greek religion in any simple fashion. There is no reason whatsoever to imagine that either he or his audience expected syncretic reflections to be consistent, unproblematic or totalising. Given the inconsistencies even about deities and cults even within Greek culture, itself a kaleidoscopic phenomenon, there could hardly be any expectation that an Egyptian deity would be identifiable

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Diod. 1. 14 on Isis and crops, with Bernal (2013).

<sup>9</sup> LIMC *s.v.* Isis, nos. 260–4.

in any complete way with a single Greek counterpart. At the same time, however, there were similarities enough to suggest identifications, whether tighter or looser, which facilitated mutual understanding and contact across cultures, while also buttressing a sense that the supernatural was universal, however it might be interpreted, worshipped and named locally. Herodotus did not need to set all that out as he moved across cultures and their religions.

He knew full well that Isis was Demeter, but that there was also much more involved. In that sense, Isis was Demeter, but also not Demeter. Accordingly, rather than insist on Herodotus' supposed shortcomings in these matters, we should credit him with a broader awareness of complexity in his identifications also where there is no accompanying mythology to problematise them, as with his summary identifications of Scythian deities, for example (4. 59). As for Egypt, scholars seem to be making a welcome return to an appreciation of how much Herodotus understood, with whatever reservations. Visible too in recent studies is a similarly welcome desire to move beyond the notion that, in exploring Egypt for his audience, Herodotus was also exploring Greek culture. That much is important and incontestable, perhaps even inevitable as any observer moves between cultures, but it is only a corner of the story. Herodotus had a lot to say about his experiences in Egypt, and it is by no means clear that the exploration of Greek culture in that context was high on his agenda, whether consciously or subconsciously. Of course, he used what he knew as his frame and grid of reference, but understanding Egypt was his overwhelming concern in book 2 of the *Histories*, for Egypt was well-known as a large portion of the human culture that was the author's still greater subject.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, it was not only with Demeter that Isis was identified, for, as Herodotus' mythological details indicate well enough, there was much about the identification that was unsatisfactory in Greek terms. Another face of Isis was Aphrodite.<sup>11</sup> On that basis Isis' son, Horus the child, could be hellenised under the name Harpocrates, and identified with Eros. A son hardly suited Demeter. Indeed, the Egyptians had themselves, from New Kingdom times, tended to identify Isis with their own Hathor, a goddess of love. At the same time, Aphrodite suited the connection of Isis with

<sup>10</sup> Further, Moyer (2011) esp. 83; Vasunia (2001) appreciates Herodotus' complexity, but is much less interested in Egyptian realities and contributions to the account of the *Histories*. On Herodotus, Egypt, the origin of Greek gods and especially their names, see Thomas (2000) esp. 274–82; in general also Harrison (2000); Hartog (2002); Lloyd (2002). The fashion for general scepticism and fault-finding in Herodotus seems at last to be failing.

<sup>11</sup> LIMC *s.v.* Isis, nos. 249–59.

water of different kinds. For water was of the first importance to the cult of Isis and central to its rituals, especially the water of the Nile.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Isis was also a goddess of the sea and of travel by sea. Among her famously numerous epithets in Greek were Pelagia ('Isis of the Open Sea') and Euploia ('Isis of the Good Voyage'), otherwise redolent of Aphrodite.<sup>13</sup> Isis' two spheres of love and the sea/water, made her identification with Aphrodite entirely natural, albeit, again, not wholly satisfactory.

Meanwhile, Isis-Hathor was also imagined and depicted as in some sense a cow,<sup>14</sup> so that Greek thoughts turned readily to the most famous of Greek cow-deities, Io, despite the fact that this was a deity far less significant than major goddesses like Demeter and Aphrodite. Io was also appropriate, because, like Isis, she too had roamed the world, albeit under different circumstances. Io had been driven by Hera's jealousy of Zeus' passion for her;<sup>15</sup> hers was not a search for a lost brother-husband, as was the case with Isis.<sup>16</sup> The hymns of praise on the accomplishments of Isis (her so-called aretalogies) which have survived in some numbers (in inscribed form, as well as literary texts) stress the sheer range of the goddess' power and significance as the origin of civilisation and benefactress of all mankind.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, she was also Tyche, whose sphere too was boundless, embracing all aspects of life, including themes of sailing (literally and metaphorically) and fertility, as shown iconographically in the rudder and cornucopia that Isis-Tyche regularly sports.<sup>18</sup>

No Greek who encountered Egyptian Isis could fail to appreciate the sheer range of her associations and concerns, which meant that no single identification would suffice. Accordingly, even in identifying Isis as Demeter Herodotus had also observed (2. 41) Isis' iconographic similarity with Greek Io:

The clean males then of the ox kind, both full-grown animals and calves, are sacrificed by all the Egyptians; the females however they may not sacrifice, but these are sacred to Isis; for the figure of Isis is in the form of a woman with cow's horns, just as the Hellenes present images of Io, and all the Egyptians without distinction reverence cows far more than any other kind of cattle; for which reason neither man nor woman of Egyptian race would kiss a man who is a Greek on the mouth, nor will they use a knife or

<sup>12</sup> Wild (1981).

<sup>13</sup> Merkelbach (2001).

<sup>14</sup> On the mummified cow, see P.Zen.Pestman 50 (257 BC).

<sup>15</sup> Io was Hera's priestess in the Heraion at Argos: on cults there, including Artemis: Pfaff (2013).

<sup>16</sup> On Isis-Io, LIMC *s.v.* Isis, nos. 265–8.

<sup>17</sup> Further, Henrichs (1984) 153–4.

<sup>18</sup> LIMC *s.v.* Isis, nos. 303–18.

roasting-spits or a cauldron belonging to a Greek, nor taste of the flesh even of a clean animal if it has been cut with the knife of a Greek.

Herodotus' concern here is to highlight the gulf between Greek and Egyptian culture in their treatment of bovines, and in that vein he proceeds to expatiate on Egyptian treatment of deceased cattle. He stresses that this is not simply a matter of dietary or religious preferences, but a profound barrier to Greek–Egyptian interaction, commensality and all kinds of other personal relationships between Greek and Egyptian. In this context of polarity, Io stands out as a Greek link of sorts to Egyptian culture. He has been very explicit that Isis is Demeter, but here we see again the limits of such identification, for in terms of iconography Isis may look more like Io. For while Isis has a special association with cattle, Demeter does not. And whereas Demeter is not depicted with the horns of a bovine, Isis often appears in that form. And in Greek mythology that notion of a cow-deity not only suggests Io, but evidently raised Io from being one among many nymphs and the like of whom Zeus had become enamoured. Indeed, Io was all the more suitable because her myth culminated in Egypt itself, so that unanswerable questions arise for us as to the origins of this matrix of ideas about Isis, Io, Egypt and sacred cows. We may well suspect that they were located in early Greek–Egyptian contacts.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, Herodotus does not say that Isis is Io: we have seen that for him she was Demeter. In any case, Io was hardly significant enough in Greek terms to be equated with a goddess who was of prime importance in the religious outlook and mythology of Egyptian culture. Demeter made much better sense not only because of their shared concern with crops, motherhood and more, but also because they shared very high standing in their respective cultures. Moreover, Demeter need not exclude Io. The scope for their sharing in Isis is illustrated by the fact that the daughters of Danaus were also the descendants of Io, who had been returned to human form and become a mother in Egypt. Danaus was her grandson. Accordingly, Io too played a role in the Danaids' transformation of Isis' rites into the Thesmophoria of Demeter in Greece. Meanwhile, Greek myth also maintained that another descendant of Io was Aegyptus himself, whose name is enough to indicate his significance for Egypt in Greek tradition.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> At the other end of antiquity, Nonnus brings Io, Isis and Demeter together very neatly, by stating that Io, after her wanderings, became Isis, who is the Egyptian Demeter: *Dionys.* 3. 267ff.; cf. Wild (1981) 106.

<sup>20</sup> On Io's extensive family, see Mitchell (2001).

Going further, some four centuries after Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus reports Egyptian claims that Demeter and her festival had come from Egypt to an Athens which was itself of Egyptian origin, when it received Demeter and her festival from Egypt. While apparently acknowledging the similarity that Herodotus had observed, not least in the rites of Demeter, Diodorus regards such claims as inauthentic.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, he appended a few words about Io to his account of Egyptian ideas about Heracles (having already dilated on Isis in Egyptian mythology):

and they (sc. Egyptians) also say that the origin of Isis is transferred by the Greeks to Argos in the myth which tells of that Io who was changed into a heifer. (Diod. 1. 24. 8)

In Diodorus' account, this Greek appropriation of Isis comes immediately after extensive comment on Egyptian claims about the Greek appropriation of Heracles and (in a few words) Perseus too. Io is included as the last example of that Greek tendency here, but the whole tenor of the Egyptian position reported by Diodorus is that the Greeks had taken Egyptian deities and rituals as their own, deploying their own myths to bolster their appropriations.

Meanwhile, besides the Thesmophoria, Danaus and his daughters were also credited with introducing irrigation into the Argolid plain.<sup>22</sup> Through them Io had returned to her homeland in Argos. Her family, in the person of Danaos, had returned to the throne, which was arguably hers by right as the daughter of Inachus. Moreover, Inachus was himself to become a river-god, the main river in Argos. Crucially, all this meshed very well with the outlines of Isis' cult in Egypt, and more broadly with the reputation of Egypt as the land of the mighty Nile and the complex story of irrigation that went with it.<sup>23</sup> As we have seen, water was central to Isis' rituals and mythology, particularly the River Nile itself, the product of the tears she shed for Osiris and, it was said, the home of his severed penis. In view of Io's associations with Isis, it was entirely fitting that her descendants should not only return from Egypt to their homeland, but also bring with them the irrigating waters of the Nile in the sense that they and their father made Argos fertile through irrigation, with the help of Io's father the River Inachus. As Strabo has it (1.2.15), making a strong connection between knowledge and power, Danaus became king in Argos for the very reason

<sup>21</sup> Diod. 1. 29; cf. Bickerman (1952).

<sup>22</sup> J. M. Hall (1989).

<sup>23</sup> Bonneau (1964); Tvedt (2008).

that he discovered the water reserves that lay there beneath the ground. Elsewhere it is his daughters who take the credit for turning Argos from waterless to well-watered. For they had found the springs which were the source of the Inachus, which Strabo describes as 'torrential'.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, we may observe that the concerns of Demeter are not far away: Danaus' daughters had not only brought the Thesmophoria but had also given Argos a better harvest by their irrigation of its land. Ultimately, Greek mythology often had them punished with water too, because these fifty Danaids (with one or two exceptions) had killed their husbands, the fifty sons of Aegyptus on their wedding night, as instructed by their father, Danaus. These murderous brides were to spend eternity in the vain and laborious attempt to carry water in vessels with holes to fill a larger holed vessel.<sup>25</sup> There in the Underworld too, they were not so far from Isis once more.<sup>26</sup> And in Greece, not only in the Argolid, water remained of the first importance to Isis.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, in Argive tradition, the Egyptian connection through Io was part of an aetiology which explained the prosperity and even the very existence of the community on its plain watered by the River Inachus. Moreover, the one Danaid,<sup>28</sup> Hypermnestra, who had not killed her husband, named Lynkeus, had ensured also that the kings of Argos would be descended not only from Danaus, but also from Aegyptus, his brother and the father of Lynkeus. The Egyptian antecedents of Argos were therefore at the very heart of Argive identity. Io was key to all this. Moreover, she was not only Io the Greek, but also Isis the Egyptian deity. That is ensured both by her arrival and motherhood in Egypt and by the repeatedly central role of water in the myth of Danaus and the Danaids in Argos.

Beyond Hypermnestra, it is clear enough that Argos was full of water-sources where a Danaid might be imagined, whether or not elided with a nymph. For we must reckon too with the rather less well-known myth of a second Danaid who is sometimes mentioned as a further exception within the story of the fifty Danaids, so that only forty-eight of them killed their husbands.<sup>29</sup> She is Amymone, whose myth was also an aetiology for the spring of Lerna in Argos: she had caught the attention of a rampant satyr

<sup>24</sup> Strabo 7. 6. 8, citing Hesiod and so confirming the antiquity of the myth, archaic at least.

<sup>25</sup> Dion. Hal. 2. 69; Pliny, *NH* 28. 12; cf. Pembroke (1967) 32; Sissa (1990), where gender concerns have overwhelmed the irrigation theme. In drama, Zeitlin (1996); Hall (1989).

<sup>26</sup> On Osiris and Hades, probably in Sophocles' *Inachus*: Seaford (1980) with further remarks by West (1984); J. Hall (1989) 139–41, esp. on colour.

<sup>27</sup> As at Corinth: Smith (1977); cf. Bricault (2007a) on Isis there.

<sup>28</sup> Further Bachvarova (2009) 291 and below.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Pindar *Ol.* 9. 112.



while hunting, and had only been saved by Poseidon, who proceeded to have sex with her himself. She was sufficiently important to be counted by Pindar and to be made the subject of a satyr play by Aeschylus, not to mention other appearances.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, the Egyptian connection was a matter of pride in Argos and that came thanks to Io, even without the Danaids and their water. Pindar, in his tenth *Nemean Ode*, begins:

Graces, sing of the city of Danaus and his fifty daughters on their splendid thrones, Hera's Argos, a home suitable for a god; it blazes with countless excellences because of its bold deeds. Long indeed is the story of Perseus and the Gorgon Medusa, and many are the cities founded in Egypt by the devising of Epaphus. Nor did Hypermnestra go astray, when she restrained in its scabbard her sword, which was alone in its verdict.

The victor was an Argive. Pindar's decision to bring Io's son Epaphus to the fore in this poem for an Argive victor demonstrates very well that the elite of Argos revelled in their Io's Egyptian associations some twenty years before Herodotus produced his *Histories*. Small wonder that Pausanias' account of the Argolid makes a string of allusions to Egypt in book 2 of his *Guide to Greece*. Meanwhile, as the rest of Pindar's poem unfolds we soon find also Perseus and Heracles as key figures of the Argive past, showing thereby also the Argive undercurrent in Diodorus' decision to treat Heracles, Perseus and Io together as allegedly taken by Greeks from Egypt. Meanwhile, in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* we see the return of the Danaids played out on the tragic stage at Athens, possibly encouraged by the Athenian diplomacy with Argos about which we have only scattered hints in the middle of the fifth century, as well perhaps as by Athenian ambitions in Egypt, about which we hear a little more in those same years.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, back in Argos, we should not be surprised to find that the cult of Isis, which in any case spread extensively across the Mediterranean, became well established there too from Hellenistic times.<sup>32</sup>

It is hard to overstate the massive significance of Io and her offspring – the Inachids, as the family is sometimes called – in the world-reach of Greek myth and the multiple political, economic and religious relationships which that mythology informed and structured. Edith Hall captures that very well, with particular reference to the archaic *Catalogue of Women*, 'Argos became the centre of a huge international genealogy, and

<sup>30</sup> LIMC *s.v.* Amymone; Bachvarova (2009).

<sup>31</sup> Further, Mitchell (2006) with bibliography.

<sup>32</sup> Veyniers (2011).

Io's family the ancestors and founders of the Egyptians, Arabs, Phoenicians and Libyans'.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, of course, this burgeoning family took in also much of the Greek world as well as this array of 'barbarians', including even Euboea, whose name evidently encouraged the notion of a link to Io already in archaic times.<sup>34</sup> It is especially interesting to see non-Greeks responding to these notions. We are told, for example, that Amasis of Egypt bestowed gifts on the sanctuary of Athena at Lindos, because it was said to have been established by the Danaids from Egypt.<sup>35</sup> In view of the substantial Rhodian involvement with the Bosphorus and indeed with Egypt across the following centuries, we are left to consider how important and useful that Danaid tradition may have been in facilitating these relationships well after Amasis. Certainly, Herodotus' observations kept these notions alive.

### Bosporan Io and *Prometheus Bound*

The myth of Io not only encompassed an extraordinary array of relations, Greek and non-Greek, but also brought other kinds of connection too. The most important of these, for the present study, is her key role in the Crimean Bosphorus. For it was Io who had given a name to the straits of the Crimean Bosphorus (the modern Straits of Kerch) when she had crossed in the form of a cow. The dubious etymology is simple enough: *bous* suggesting a bovine and *poros* a ford or crossing. Our earliest extant account of this is in the *Prometheus Bound*, part of a Promethean trilogy which has survived under the name of Aeschylus, though it now seems generally agreed that he was not in fact the author. The most plausible assessment suggests that it was first performed around 440 BC, an uncertain date, but one which we shall see reason to support in due course.<sup>36</sup> The play is heavy with geography, not least where Io is concerned. And if this has been culled from earlier traditions, as generally supposed, we may well imagine that the naming of the Bosphorus through Io was already current in the archaic period in the mass of texts which have not survived for us.<sup>37</sup> However, she is not the centre of its action. This is the story of Prometheus, punished by a harsh Zeus, who has him fixed on a lofty crag and plagued by eagles, who

<sup>33</sup> Hall (1989) 36. This is already visible in the archaic period, as in the *Catalogue of Women*: further Vlassopoulos (2013) 174, 196.

<sup>34</sup> Mitchell (2001) on Hesiod fr. 296 MW; McNerney (2010) 132–3. On Euboea's cattle, see too Moreno (2007) ch. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Hdt. 2. 182; cf. Vlassopoulos (2013) 151.

<sup>36</sup> West (1979).

<sup>37</sup> In detail, Stoessl (1988) 42–56.

prey on his innards. It is there, in an imagined Scythian wilderness, that Io, among others, comes upon him. Both are in severe distress, both because of Zeus. For while Zeus has ordained Prometheus' torment, it was Zeus' unwelcome attention that caused Io to be driven as cow and tormented by Hera's gadfly. In this anguished atmosphere Prometheus advises her about the route she should follow:

First, from this spot, turn yourself toward the rising sun and make your way over untilled plains; and you shall reach the Scythian nomads, who dwell in thatched houses, perched aloft on strong-wheeled wagons and are equipped with far-darting bows. Do not approach them, but keeping your feet near the rugged shore, where the sea breaks with a roar, pass on beyond their land. On the left hand dwell the workers in iron, the Chalybes, and you must beware of them, since they are savage and are not to be approached by strangers. Then you shall reach the river Hybristes,<sup>7</sup> which does not belie its name. Do not cross this, for it is hard to cross, until you come to Caucasus itself, loftiest of mountains, where from its very brows the river pours out its might in fury. You must pass over its crests, which neighbour the stars, and enter upon a southward course, where you shall reach the host of the Amazons, who loathe all men. They shall in time to come inhabit Themiscyra on the Thermodon, where, fronting the sea, is Salmydessus' rugged jaw, evil host of mariners, stepmother of ships. The Amazons will gladly guide you on your way. Next, just at the narrow portals of the harbour, you shall reach the Cimmerian isthmus. This you must leave with stout heart and pass through the channel of Maeotis; and ever after among mankind there shall be great mention of your passing, and it shall be called after you the Bosphorus. Then, leaving the soil of Europe, you shall come to the Asian continent. (*PV* 707–35)

This is a lot of geography, while the play as a whole contained still more. After all, extensive and extraordinary travels are the particular characteristic of Io, and they have a large role in setting her apart from the mass of nymphs and the like who feature in Greek mythology, not least as the objects of Zeus' desire and Hera's jealousy. Since the trilogy brought her together with Prometheus, stuck at the limits of the world, and the immensely well-travelled Heracles too, a feast of geography was probably inescapable. The *Prometheus Unbound*, the next and final play in the trilogy, seems also to have been larded with the names of distant places and peoples, no doubt for similar reasons. While Inachid mythology required as much, the central myth of Prometheus concerned mankind as a whole and man's engagement with the world of nature across earth, sea and sky. This was globalised Greek mythology even beyond the regular scope of myth across continents and between man and god.

While many modern critics of *Prometheus Bound* have not shared its author's taste for the geography of the periphery, it should already be clear that the wanderings of Io have a key importance in her myth, so that their deployment can hardly be a reasonable focus of modern complaint. Her extensive travels are required as part of her move from Argos to Egypt, and also, especially in this play, to convey too the harshness of Zeus and his divine regime in bringing upon her a punishment that is even comparable with Prometheus', and which she had done nothing to deserve. It was important, therefore, that the play should bring out the great sweep of her travels through difficult and distant lands, while abiding taste for this kind of geography made its inclusion unproblematic. For we should seek also to appreciate the taste for themes of travel and adventure in distant parts which had such a major role in Greek culture even in the archaic period, as evidenced by such foundational tales as the *Odyssey*, *Iliad* and Argonautic myths and poems. In a culture whose reality was overwhelmingly static and local, with ethical and practical concerns about travel of different kinds, the appeal of distant adventures in exotically named locations and among peoples with different lifestyles, was no doubt profound and sustained.<sup>38</sup>

Of course, in geographical terms, the geography in Prometheus' remarks to Io is at best idiosyncratic and at worst absurd, as has often been observed. It may justly be termed 'parageography'.<sup>39</sup> But that idiosyncrasy and even absurdity should not be overstated: much of this geography makes tolerable enough sense, so that we can hardly attribute its shortcomings to Prometheus' deranged thinking under torture.<sup>40</sup> Io must head eastwards (towards the rising sun) from Prometheus' crag. He foretells that she will thereby come close to the Scythians, but should hug the shore and keep away from them. She will have the inhospitable Chalybes on her left, who are also to be avoided. Having reached the high Caucasus by way of the so-called River Hybristes, she must cross that river and head south, where she will find the Amazons. Thence the Cimmerian isthmus, from which Io is told that she will pass through Maeotian waters, from Europe to Asia. Her crossing of the straits here is to become famous, and the straits themselves will be called Bosporus after her. Her journeying thereafter will take her through a geography that loses all sense of reality, which in turn must be a warning about how to interpret the strange geography of the northern Black Sea in this play.

<sup>38</sup> Romm (1992); Brown (2011); Budelmann (2013); Bierl and Lardinois (2016).

<sup>39</sup> Podlecki (2005), esp. 201–7, summarises scholarship well. On 'parageography', see White (2001) 116.

<sup>40</sup> An ingenious suggestion: further, White (2001) 116 n. 38.

A simple fact is often overlooked. We are dealing, of course, with a drama, not a discourse on geographical details. In consequence, we should not be overly surprised, perhaps, to find that the geography of *Prometheus Bound* (and quite possibly the rest of the trilogy too) did not meet the highest standards of contemporary geographical knowledge. The play was the thing. It was sufficient that the audience's knowledge and conception of the geography involved so centrally in the play should not be disturbed, unless that was itself a dramatic strategy. As long as that were achieved, technical inaccuracies would not matter. And it probably was so achieved. For, while there is certainly idiosyncrasy in the play's geography, it must be acknowledged that there is much in the geography of this section of the *Prometheus Bound* that is not especially problematic.

Prometheus' location is the starting-point for Io here. The *hypothesis* of the play stresses that Prometheus' crag is not in the Caucasus (where it often was<sup>41</sup>) and we should accept that without quibble. For the lines quoted above demand as much. As the play opens we see his crag located rather vaguely in a far-off, uninhabited corner of Scythia<sup>42</sup> which is uncongenial even to Zeus' awful henchmen, who fix him there. However, the quoted lines make it entirely clear that this point is imagined somehow well to the west of the Caucasus, as the *hypothesis* rightly insists, and doubtless to the north too. From that crag, Io is urged to avoid the Scythian nomads by clinging to the shore: the sea is unspecified, so that we may think of the Black Sea or even Ocean, and possibly both. The advice seems to reflect something of fifth-century realities, with a coastal region that was by then settled by Greeks and to that extent relatively secure from hostile Scythians. The Chalybes are usually located in the south-eastern Black Sea, but their association with Scythians makes it possible to place them on the north coast. Indeed, Aeschylus himself seems to identify them in terms of Scythians, albeit offering no clarity about their precise location (*Septem* 728). Thereafter, proceeding further eastwards, Io will ultimately reach the Caucasus, by means of a River Hybristes which cannot be located convincingly on the map, but may have something of the Kuban (Greek, Hypanis) about it.

Having crossed this river near its source high in the Caucasus, Io's southward turn will take her to the Amazons. Clearly these have not

<sup>41</sup> Rightly stressed by Finkelberg (1998) after Bolton (1962), but attempts to see the Rhine and even Alps here are unpersuasive.

<sup>42</sup> Herodotus' more restricted notion of Scythia is more exceptional than this vaguer conception, *pace* Finkelberg (1998).

yet founded Themiscyra, so may be located anywhere in the region with impunity (except at Themiscyra on the southeastern Black Sea coast): they are at home enough around the Caucasus (e.g. Strabo II. 5. 1). The route from them to the Cimmerian Bosphorus is not explained, and could not be explained, for Io must now retrace some of her steps, continue all around the Black Sea and/or cross its waters, which she clearly does not. That part of the journey is omitted by Prometheus: it is a task left for the Amazons, who will show Io the way there. At least, by the long diversion she has managed to cross the mighty Hybristes, whose very name is daunting enough, as Prometheus stresses. And yet she seems to approach the Cimmerian Bosphorus from its European side, when it would be much easier to imagine her on its Asian side, coming from the Caucasus. This seems particularly odd, but we have seen that the River Phasis (whose mention shows that it was not the Hybristes) was somehow also imagined as a boundary between Europe and Asia in the trilogy: if we could explain its coexistence as such a boundary with the Cimmerian Bosphorus, then we might better explain the geographical conception underlying Prometheus' words. Ultimately, we are forced to suppose a return westwards past the Caucasus, perhaps across the Phasis, by which she loops down into the Crimea again and so crosses the straits from Europe into Asia once more. Since she travels in a state of madness, a circuitous route is quite in keeping. And these meanderings – if we choose to press the geographical details – is certainly mad.

In sum, as we trace the route foretold for Io, we can find a broadly comprehensible chain of movement without recourse to the intellectual gymnastics and special pleading that have sometimes characterised modern discussions of these tangled matters.<sup>43</sup> The result, however, remains unappealing in terms of geography. Further, and curiously, the outstanding peculiarity in Prometheus' advice is Salmydessus, which is apparently superfluous. It seems to be brought in with Themiscyra, which itself was necessary only insofar as our author could thereby make clear that his Amazons have not yet moved to their familiar location in the southeastern Black Sea and are therefore at home around the Caucasus. Both Salmydessus and Themiscyra were presumably included by name because these were toponyms whose outlandish sound and violent associations would serve to convey a sense of wild barbarity to the audience. As our text shows, neither place had any direct relevance to Io's journey here. However, irrelevance to Io's myth mattered much less than the dramatic

<sup>43</sup> Notably, Bolton (1962).

evocation of mood. Meanwhile, there is no basis for modern notions that the Sauromatians are somehow included here: they are not Amazons and are not much associated with the high Caucasus. The greatest puzzle in this whole account is why Salmydessus was somehow thought to be at Themiscyra: its exotic name and reputation for destruction do not entirely suffice to explain its peculiar location here. It may be that the Thracian identity of the Amazons has played some part in the relocation of Salmydessus from Thrace to their city of Themiscyra, but it remains hard to see quite how.

All these considerations of detail, however, threaten to obscure the overarching purpose of this 'parageography'. Salmydessus points the way. The fact is that, while all these peoples and places in Prometheus' speech are brought into a narrative of her journey to come, the dramatic impact does not reside in the connections between them. The impact is in the names themselves. These peoples and places are each redolent of the violent danger of this region, through which hapless Io must make her journey, and thence on through other lands until she achieves a kind of redemption at journey's end in Egypt. These Black Sea names each hammer home the horror of her predicament. And where our author thought fit, he further reinforces that impression by explicit characterisation of each people and place. Scythians, known for their violence, are to be avoided: their alien lifestyle is indicated, as is their worrying weaponry. The Chalybes too, as in *Septem* (728–9), will be hostile. The Hybristes river evokes more danger: the purport of its name is stressed, while it resists crossing until the very Caucasus, also renowned for its difficulty. The Amazons too are full of hostility: their help for Io offers little comfort to Athenians (especially Athenian males) who know of their assault on the city. Themiscyra evokes them again, and probably the story of Theseus there and, again, the Amazon invasion of Attica against him. And, finally, the wholly irrelevant Salmydessus is brought in where it should not be, because it represents already so much of the danger and hostility of the region, this Inhospitable Sea. In case the audience misses its horrors, Prometheus expounds on them. Dramatically, the combined effect of this torrent of names and details is to convey a powerful sense of the ghastly dangers that poor Io must traverse. The audience is not invited to reflect upon the accuracy of her route, which is more a matter for the library than the stage.

At the same time, however, the author's evident expectation that an Athenian audience would not be troubled by Io's peculiar route deserves more attention than it has received. For it is extremely suggestive about the date of the play, on which everything seems to have been deployed except

a consideration of history. For we can chart the growth of Athenian experience of the Black Sea in broad terms from the Persian Wars down to around the time of the Peloponnesian War, during which the theatre of operations would tend increasingly in this Pontic direction. First, we must be aware of the authorial commonplace that persisted, astonishingly enough, even into the Byzantine world, about the obscurity of the Black Sea, which was recurrently presented as somehow a place of mystery. That trope, usually an excuse for excursus, is not to be accepted without major reservations.<sup>44</sup> For there was substantial archaic settlement all around its shores, especially from Ionia, but also from Megara and even, it was claimed, from Sparta. Quite apart from the thorny issue of grain supply, the Black Sea region had had a place in Greek thought and practice from the early archaic period, where, for example, Leuke was well known and also Achilles' broad association with the region of Scythia.<sup>45</sup> In the fifth century BC, operations against the Persians had taken Greek forces to Byzantium and no doubt in some part beyond. For that reason, the Black Sea had been specified under the Peace of Callias as a region into which Athenian warships should not sail. However, the events of 440 and its aftermath had changed all that, when, pursuant to the suppression of revolt in Byzantium, Pericles had led a substantial Athenian naval force into the Black Sea around 437. Our key account (Plut. *Pericles* 20) stresses that this force paraded its presence far and wide across the region, seeking to impress Greeks and non-Greeks alike. There was no direct Persian response. Modern attempts to deny the reality of this campaign are undermined by the various other pieces of evidence that are available, including detail on the settlement of Athenians at Sinope, Athenian casualty-lists of the right date from the region and, perhaps above all, the assessment of Black Sea cities for tribute. That is visible in the inscribed lists of 425.<sup>46</sup>

This increasing involvement of Athenians in the Black Sea region through the fifth century is the informing context for the various peoples and places of the region who proliferate in Athenian drama, in tragedy and comedy alike.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, the date of the Prometheus trilogy remains unknown, but a strong case has been made for a date around 440. We should observe that this is close to the suppression of revolt at Byzantium and the eve of a major Athenian initiative in the region, with settlement

<sup>44</sup> Cf. West (2003) 155) persuaded by Polybius 4. 38. 11 on visits to Byzantium, which do not equate to knowledge. Antiquity is littered with various kinds of periplus of the Black Sea.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Pinney (1983).

<sup>46</sup> On all these matters, Braund (2005a).

<sup>47</sup> Braund (2005a) gathers examples. Cf. Braund and Hall (2014).



to follow there. This major development in Athenian involvement in the region requires that the trilogy cannot have been later than c. 440. For, after that date, the author of *Prometheus Bound* should have expected his Athenian audience to be quite well informed about the region. True, they might not know much about the hinterland, but they would certainly know that Salmydessus, the great hazard that lay not so far into the Black Sea, was not located by Themiscyra far on its southeast shore. A dramatist could hope to get away with that in Athens before c. 440, but hardly after that time. Indeed, in view of the strong Black Sea element in the trilogy, which was evidently carried on in the *Prometheus Unbound*, we may well wonder whether the creation and performance of the play c. 440 may have been encouraged or otherwise contextualised by talk in Athens of action in the region, not only to quell Byzantium, but also with more ambitious intent.

Some twenty years earlier, Aeschylus' *Supplikes* had offered a more modest mention of the Black Sea and of Io's travels. That was enough for that play, whose concern was not so much Io's wanderings as the subsequent return of Inachids to Argos. However, it is worth noting affinities between the geographical matter of *Prometheus Bound* and that of *Supplikes*, although it has been more usual instead to emphasise the difference that arises from the different aspects of Inachid mythology that they each seek to bring out.<sup>48</sup> For example, here in *Prometheus Bound* we find Io set to benefit from the support of Amazons, whose hostility to males here no doubt accounts in large part for their help for their fellow female, wronged by male Zeus. However, in *Supplikes*, the Danaids were themselves compared with Amazons on arrival in Argos.<sup>49</sup> The Amazons were all the more appropriate in Io's myth, because they too were to cross the Cimmerian Bosphorus: they did that later (in response to Theseus' assault on Themiscyra) and in a rather different way, crossing on the famous ice there. Hellanicus is the first ancient writer to mention this, in the later fifth century BC, but the idea may well be older than that: it is an early example of Mediterranean fascination with ice and the potential it offered to walk, ride and even hold a land battle on what was in essence water.<sup>50</sup> In such ways, Io's myth fostered notions of Amazons, who, like Io herself,

<sup>48</sup> Garvie (1969) esp. 159–60 calmly demolishes that kind of claim (cf. also the 'corrected edition' of 2006).

<sup>49</sup> *Suppl.* 287.

<sup>50</sup> Hellanicus, *ap.* Plut. *Theseus* 27. 1; cf. Diod. 4. 28. 2.

evoked both gender-issues and the geography of the northern periphery. Hellanicus has much in common with Herodotus here (esp. 4. 28).<sup>51</sup>

A further interesting similarity is the appearance of the Bosphorus too in *Supplices*, where it features in the play's brief account of Io's travels, though textual corruption makes its interpretation particularly awkward. There seems no allusion to the etymology, but perhaps there was no need to make that explicit or to expand upon it in a play about Inachids in Argos. Nor is it entirely clear whether the Bosphorus of the play is the Crimean Bosphorus (as in the Prometheus trilogy) or the Thracian Bosphorus near Byzantium, though the latter is probably to be preferred here. For, in *Supplices* Aeschylus stresses the great multitude of peoples through whom Io travelled, though the fact that he specifies only peoples of Asia Minor and seems to start listing them from the northwest tends to suggest that the Bosphorus at Byzantium is meant. In either case, there is no real contradiction between the two plays, for Io might as well be associated with the one as with the other. Both were very usual as a boundary between Europe and Asia, which was clearly important in both plays. Io had not only wandered extensively (and madly, insofar as she was pursued by Hera's vicious gadfly), but had moved across and between continents. It is unclear whether she also crossed the Phasis, which evidently occurred in *Prometheus Unbound* as a boundary between Asia and Europe, perhaps beside the Tanais, which returns us to the Crimean Bosphorus.<sup>52</sup>

### Bosporan Outlooks: Io and Osiris

One of the great open questions about the history of the Bosphorus in the fifth century BC is the extent to which Athenian adventures in the Black Sea are to be connected with the sharp change in government there in these years. At the very least we have an extraordinary coincidence, for we are told that it was in 438 that a new dynasty came to power in the Bosphorus, with the ascent of Spartocus I. He was the founder of the Spartocid dynasty which would rule in the Bosphorus down to Mithridates Eupator at the end of the second century BC. The former ruling dynasty in the Bosphorus, about which we know very little beyond their name, the Archaeanactids, were swept away by Spartocus. His dynasty maintained a consistently pro-Athenian stance through those centuries, even in the difficult years of the end of the Peloponnesian War.<sup>53</sup> In truth, we cannot know

<sup>51</sup> See p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> Aesch. fr. 191, with Griffith (1983) on *Prometheus Bound* 734–5.

<sup>53</sup> Braund (2003) against claims that the Spartocids were sometimes at odds with Athens.

about the extent of Athenian involvement in the ascent of Spartocus I, but its date and his dynasty's sustained friendship towards the Athenians can only tend to suggest that the Athenians had played some role. For Pericles' expedition was a clear breach of the Peace of Callias. It seems likely that Persia had been involved in the revolt of Byzantium in 440, as we know it to have been in the simultaneous revolt on Samos.<sup>54</sup> Evidently, Spartocus had replaced a regime in the Bosphorus which had been tolerated, if not actively supported, by the Persians, so that Pericles' expedition must have played a role in his taking power, whether directly or indirectly through the undermining of Persian suzerainty in the region as a whole.

In view of Bosporan friendship with Athens, we may be sure that the Bosporan elite was gratified by the appearance of its lands on the Athenian stage, however fleetingly. For in the fifth century BC in particular that meant the inclusion of their distant world in a Greek political and cultural centre *par excellence*. We see in the Bosphorus under the Spartocids a sustained desire to connect with Hellenic culture, particularly, no doubt, in the face of the ongoing issues posed by the various non-Greeks (and indeed other Greek communities) with whom the Bosphorus coexisted. Isocrates' *Trapezicus* illustrates that well enough, while showing also the depth of the Athenian–Bosporan relationship already in the early years of the fourth century BC. The Bosporan speaker sets out his case in terms of his admiration for Athens, as was no doubt wise in an Athenian court, but also shows himself shipping grain there to finance himself in what he claims as a quest for Hellenic culture in the city. Meanwhile, he reveals for us the activities of a substantial Bosporan grouping in Athens, closely in touch with their king, who controls them from afar. While the speaker plays to his audience, his sentiments are no different from those of others from his kingdom across the centuries, such as the Bosporan king who came to dance attendance on the sophist Polemo in the second century AD.<sup>55</sup> Athenians had become used to the devotion of distant monarchs, as we see in Aristophanes' *Wasps* of 422, where Sitalces' allegiance is the butt of humour: the Athenian audience hears of him scrawling 'The Athenians are beautiful' on walls in his Thracian kingdom. As with Thrace, so too with the Bosphorus there was a military side to this diplomacy, wherein each participant in the relationship could hope to benefit.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Thuc. 1. 115. 4 (Samos). On Byzantium, cf. Badian (1987) 24, with the questionable assertion that the Persian regime was dysfunctional in the area.

<sup>55</sup> On these attitudes, Braund (1997).

<sup>56</sup> Ar. *Acharnians* 141–50 stresses the military aspect, as was natural in time of war. Cf. IG ii<sup>2</sup> 653 on military benefit in the Bosphorus from Athenian naval specialism.

Moreover, theatre had a particular role in that cultural bond, because Scythians evidently had a special problem with the cult of Dionysus, as we hear very clearly from Herodotus. His *Histories* employ Dionysus as a prime means of distinguishing between Greeks and non-Greeks in the region, as is especially clear in its notably polemical treatment of the Geloni and Budini, where the former are adjudged Greek particularly because they have a festival and temple of Dionysus (Hdt. 4. 108–9). Meanwhile, his account of King Scyles at Olbia, a latter-day Pentheus, serves further to illustrate the divide between Greeks and Scythians over Dionysus, whose symposium was quite alien to Scythian mores. At the same time, the fact that Olbia's wine was all imported must have given a particular emphasis there to the idea that his rites came from across the sea. At Olbia it was both his wine and the very city itself that had come that way, underlining the community's bonds with the Greeks of the Aegean as well as other Greeks around the Black Sea where wine might also be produced.<sup>57</sup> We may be sure that the rulers of the Bosphorus would relish the appearance of their realm on stage under the aegis of a Dionysus who was for them a major marker of their own Hellenism at the periphery of the Greek world. In that sense it mattered to Bosporans that Io had traversed the very centre of their kingdom, which was the Cimmerian Bosphorus itself, and that she had even left the monument of her name there. After all, that name was also their name, a large part of their collective and individual identities. At the same time, however, Io was not their ancestress, so that her significance for them was a matter of territory and not quite kinship, as we shall see.

Meanwhile, a much-neglected passage in Stephanus of Byzantium (*s.v.* Taurike) brings Egypt to bear on all this, by locating Osiris in the Crimea:

It is said that Osiris there yoked oxen and ploughed the land, and so on account of the bull-yoking the people was named.

This remarkable tradition belongs to a larger conception of Osiris. For, as Plutarch observes (*De Is.* 356a–b), he was held first to have established agriculture and settled civilisation among the Egyptians and then to have travelled about the earth doing the same elsewhere. The tradition preserved by Stephanus seems to be an example of that broader journeying, set in the Crimea. And its larger context does not require us to suppose that it was new in his text: we do not know how old the notion of Osiris in the Crimea may have been, though one might have hoped that Herodotus

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Braund (2015a); Braund (2016); Slater (1976).

would have mentioned it if he had known of it.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, this tradition encourages the suspicion that Herodotus' sustained interest in bringing together Egypt of the south with Scythia of the north was not peculiar to him, but part of a larger way of viewing the world.<sup>59</sup> The people in question in Taurike are of course the Tauroi, or Taurians, whose name is echoed by their homeland, Taurike, on which Stephanus is commenting. In Greek their name meant 'bulls',<sup>60</sup> and the tradition about Osiris not only exploits that simple etymology, but also suggests a connection with the bulls of Egypt. Isis, Osiris' sister-wife, was mother of Apis the bull in Egyptian religion. Greeks might interpret that as Io's motherhood of Epaphus.<sup>61</sup> The development of the Serapeum in Sinope, across the sea from the Crimea, may well have connected with this notion of Crimean Osiris, since Serapis seems to have been widely understood as the fusion of Osiris and Apis from Ptolemy I onwards.<sup>62</sup>

A further indication of that Egyptian connection in the Crimea is an inscription recently found at Tauric Chersonesus.<sup>63</sup> It is a dedication to Serapis and Isis, together also with Anubis, dated to c. 250 BC. The three deities are not unusually found together, particularly if there is a cure or hope of salvation.<sup>64</sup> Here we seem to have an altar:<sup>65</sup>

Χάρμιππος Πρυτάνιος  
κατ' ἐπίταγμα  
Σαράπι Ἴσι Ἄνουῦβι

Charmippus, son of Prytanis, in accordance with instruction, to Sarapis, Isis and Anubis.

The nature of the instruction (*epitagma*) which caused Charmippus to dedicate this altar is not stated, but a dream is not unlikely. Since we know nothing of Charmippus, we can only speculate as to the reasons for his concern with this Egyptian triad in the Crimea, but, taken with the tradition about Osiris there and the broader tendency to identify Isis and Io,

<sup>58</sup> Hecataeus of Abdera is one author capable of this story, and he was certainly among the sources of Stephanus. His extant fragments often mention Osiris. Cf. Dillery (1998).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Romm (1992).

<sup>60</sup> On the importance of that: p. 91.

<sup>61</sup> Further, Gwyn Griffiths (1986).

<sup>62</sup> On the Serapeum at Sinope, see Barat (2011). On pre-Ptolemaic Serapis, at least in Memphis, UPZ 1. 1: the 'Curse of Artemisia', dated to the fourth century BC, invoking the god Oserapis (*sic*).

<sup>63</sup> Note also SEG 33. 611, for a possible dedication of the fourth century to Isis from Cercinitis, but we have only an iota and sigma. In general, Kutaisov (2015).

<sup>64</sup> E.g. Veyniers (2011) 114 n. 72.

<sup>65</sup> SEG 50. 691; cf. 52. 731 (3a), a stamp on imported pottery.

Charmippus' act starts to reveal a significant concern with Isis and her associates there already in the third century B.C. To that extent the inscription lends a little further credence to the suspicion that the Osiris tradition was much older than Stephanus, as indeed was usual with the contents of his work.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, we must also locate Charmippus' dedication in the larger history of the Hellenistic development of Egyptian cults in the western Black Sea and Hellespont.<sup>67</sup>

The detail that Osiris yoked the bulls is also potentially important, especially as a single bull would have been enough for ploughing. The act of yoking may be seen as the god's domination of the bulls, and so perhaps the Tauri, but we are left to wonder whether there may also be an allusion here to another form of 'yoking', not of bulls but of the sides of a water-course. We may immediately compare the famous crossing of the Euphrates at Zeugma, or 'Yoke'. Closer still is the Thracian Bosphorus, where Xerxes' crossing was imagined in Aeschylus' *Persians* as an act of yoking,<sup>68</sup> while Herodotus uses the same image (Hdt. 7. 10). In Xerxes' case yoking was an especially apposite metaphor in that he had thrown a bridge across the Hellespont, as one might put a yoke on a bull. However, to establish any kind of crossing was to do much the same, even without a bridge: the *poros* of the Bosphorus brought together the two lands on either side, which were no less than the continents of Europe and Asia. Once established, the *poros* was at least as permanent as any bridge, so that Io-Isis' crossing had yoked the Cimmerian Bosphorus. One might even perceive a parallelism between Osiris' act of yoking bulls and his sister-wife's yoking of the straits.

In the Roman period, we sometimes find in the inscriptions of Bosporan kings the form *Boosporos* in place of the more familiar Bosphoros.<sup>69</sup> We have from Rome the short epitaph of a certain Hedykos, who is named as 'ambassador of the Phanagoritans of the *Boos poros*'.<sup>70</sup> The space between the two latter words serves to bring out the latent etymology. No doubt the Bosporan link to Io and the Inachids assisted his mission, for it apparently took the fancy of those who received him at Rome and buried him there. We should observe that the epitaph of a Bosporan interpreter (of Sarmatian) which accompanies that of Hedykos, on the same

<sup>66</sup> Of course, the triad did not *require* that Osiris tradition. Attempts to link this inscription with the Nymphaeum fresco are unpersuasive: see below p. 160.

<sup>67</sup> Bricault (2007b), esp. 246–7.

<sup>68</sup> With overtones of marriage too: Hopman (2012) 137.

<sup>69</sup> CIRB 40 is the earliest, from Augustus' time, while CIRB 56 shows the form continuing into the royal titles of the third century AD.

<sup>70</sup> IGUR II 567a, whose context suggests residence at the imperial court under Augustus-Tiberius.

small plaque, does nothing to bring out the etymology. Otherwise, the only other example of the usage outside the Bosporan kingdom itself is an epitaph erected at Nicomedia by two Bosporans for their brothers, as *Boosporanoi* (TAM IV. 1. 239). However, the usage is nowhere attested before the Roman period and hardly at all in any non-epigraphic context.<sup>71</sup> Since *Boosporos* is a form which makes particularly explicit the etymology traced to Io's crossing, we seem to have in this usage a hint of a concern in the Bosporan kingdom of the Roman period to make rather clearer its connection with Io.<sup>72</sup> While the Spartocid rulers of the Bosphorus show no sign of claiming descent from her, the Bosporan kings of the Principate placed some emphasis on their descent from Heracles, who belonged to Io's family – in Argos and in Egypt – and also had his own presence in the eastern Crimea, at Heracleum.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, in the *Prometheus* trilogy, Heracles too plays a large role, for it is he who removes Prometheus' bonds. As we have seen, there were many tales of Heracles, and we do not know all that was said of him in the Bosporan kingdom.<sup>74</sup> However, we can see that Heracles, Io-Isis and Osiris together form a set of traditions concerning the Crimea and its crossing, which seem to turn on bovines, for we should recall to Herodotus' account of the tradition that Heracles passed through the region with the cattle of Geryon: he is clear that this was told by the Greeks of the region, though that probably meant the Greeks of Olbia in particular.<sup>75</sup> The idea that Heracles was a kinsman of Osiris and Isis made that set of associations still more coherent (e.g. Diod. 1. 3). We are left to wonder how far the descendants of Heracles who ruled the Bosphorus saw themselves as bringing the unruly bulls – the Tauri – under their yoke, while yoking the two sides of their kingdom across the straits to boot.

However, we must be clear that there are very few traces of any of this in the material record from the Bosphorus itself. Despite Io's importance to the kingdom, there is no single extant image of her there that can be identified with any confidence. All the more remarkable, therefore, is an inscription from the area of Temir Gora, with the Sea of Azov close to the north and the narrows of the straits at the east. For it explicitly and exceptionally connects the Bosporan King Cotys I with the Inachids:<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Sibylline Oracles* 14. 174 seems to be the only example.

<sup>72</sup> By contrast, Minns (1913) 569 n. 9 sees only 'mistaken pedantry'.

<sup>73</sup> See further p. 191 on this and his wider significance across the region.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. the Rhodope krater, p. 82, together with his role in the cult-myth at Apatouron, p. 187.

<sup>75</sup> Hdt. 4. 8–10 with Braund (2011b).

<sup>76</sup> Scholars have erroneously tended to see Achaeans in these Inachids: e.g. Minns (1913) 598; cf. CIRB commentary, ad loc, apparently impressed by the Achaei, well known at the frontiers of the Asiatic Bosphorus, but wholly irrelevant to this poem of the Crimea.

τήνδ' ἀρετὴ κρήνης πολλὴν λιβάδ' ἐξανέδειξεν  
 υ<ί>έος Ἀσπούργου, εὐσεβέος Κότυος,  
 γαίης καὶ προγόνων πατρῶιον ἄραμένοιο  
 κῦδος κείναχίων σκῆπτρ' ἐπέχοντος ὄλα  
 (CIRB 958)

The virtue of pious Kotys son of Aspurgus showed forth the great stream of this spring, having the ancestral glory of land and forebears, and wielding all the sceptres of the Inachids.

Evidently these elegiac couplets featured at a fountain-house or the like, presumably in the general vicinity of Temir Gora, near where it was found to the north of Adjimoushkai. This is the hilly northeastern tip of the Crimea, where the spring-waters are famous and marketed under the name 'Baksy', one of the principal kurgans there. The water available here was all the more important because the region more generally is rather dry. As for the stone, the profiled upper edge of the marble plaque on which it was cut gives the merest hint of the structure.<sup>77</sup> That and the royal connection tend to suggest a structure of some artifice, so that we may wonder whether it featured also an image of Io or the like. Certainly, she and the Inachids could hardly have been more apposite here, close to the crossing at Porthmium and in the vicinity too of Heracleum, with its cult of Inachid Heracles. Moreover, we saw at Argos the linkage of local springs with the descendants of Io, all in the larger context of Inachid irrigation of the region, with a talent brought from Egypt with its extraordinary river and water-system. Here we have a Bosporan counterpart, with Inachids once more prominent in a context of irrigation and water supply. In this case the king himself is given the credit for the discovery of the spring, it seems, though we are left to imagine how that might have happened. His wielding of the sceptres of the Inachids seems to hint that he had something of the special powers of the descendants of Io and her father, the River Inachus, with their Egyptian dimension. Of course, the poet does not quite say that Cotys himself was an Inachid by descent, but he does seem to suggest as much, because otherwise he could hardly be said to wield the sceptres. In all this we must be clear that these allusions were not particularly obscure in their day. Not only did the Inachids figure very prominently in the influential *Catalogue of Women*, which was ascribed to Hesiod, and so feature prominently in the poetry of the later Greek world,

<sup>77</sup> See Latyshev's sketch: IPE 2. 37.



as in our Bosporan verses, but they featured too, for example, in the early imperial poetry of Rome.<sup>78</sup>

Evidently, the concern with Bosporan Io that is traceable in the use of the form Boosporos from Augustan times waxed on under Cotys I in the middle of the first century AD, at least according to poetic sensibilities at this most appropriate of spots. The surprise is not so much that the sense of Io was developed in this poem at the Crimean Bosporus as we saw it also at the Thracian Bosporus, but that Io and Inachids did not figure much more often and prominently there. Remarkable in a different way, also, is the ambition of the poet's flattery of Cotys, 'wielding all the sceptres of the Inachids'. The claim was extraordinary in view of the extent of Io's family that we have observed. Egypt was only part of the claim. To wield all the sceptres of the Inachids was to rule much of the world. In that way the poet set his king at a level second only to the Roman emperor himself, whether Claudius or Nero. The probability that Cotys approved the poem's inscription at the spring gives a rare insight into his grand sense of himself and his place in the world. Tacitus gives us an indication of the pride of his brother, Mithridates VIII, even when put on show in the forum at Rome. At his lowest ebb, Cotys' brother is said to have declared himself to be an undefeated Achaemenid. And that attitude seems to have persisted as he subsequently met his death through participation in Nymphidius Sabinus' plans to seize the imperial throne itself. The poetry of the fountain-house fleshes out further the grand claims of the royal brothers.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, it may help our understanding of Mithridates' claim to be an Achaemenid, which has long been a problem for students of the Bosporan kingdom. For among the most renowned of the many descendants of Io was Perseus, on whom we have already had cause to reflect in this connection. It may well be important that he was taken by Greeks to be the ancestor of the Persians.<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile, we glimpse Isis in dedications of the Roman period at Tyras (IOSPE i<sup>2</sup> 5) and Olbia (IOSPE i<sup>2</sup> 184), in addition to Charmippus' Hellenistic dedication at Tauric Chersonesus.<sup>81</sup> But neither Isis nor Io is to be found among the many inscribed stones of the Bosporan kingdom itself. The same is true of Serapis, who appears with Isis at Tyras, Olbia and Chersonesus, but is not attested in the epigraphy of the Bosporan

<sup>78</sup> Ziogas (2013) esp. 79–81.

<sup>79</sup> See esp. Tac. *Ann.* 12. 18–20 with Braund (1996) 128.

<sup>80</sup> Hdt. 7. 61 with Vannicelli (2012) esp. 256–64.

<sup>81</sup> Above; cf. also Isis at Kiz Aul: SEG 45. 991 (not Kyz Aul). On Heracles in kinship diplomacy, see too Jones (1999) esp. 39–41.

kingdom. Their absence is all the more striking when we consider the profile of these deities elsewhere around the Black Sea and beyond, especially at Sinope, where Serapis was of the first importance, though we should note too that the epigraphic record is distinctly thin even there.<sup>82</sup> Some in antiquity considered Sinope to have been his place of origin.<sup>83</sup> At least, there emerged a strong (if implausible) tradition that the cult-statue of the god had been taken from Sinope to Alexandria early in the life of the cult.

The absence of Isis and Serapis from the stones of the Bosporan kingdom is important, but its significance is rather unclear nevertheless. For it is also important to understand that inscriptions entailing these deities are not plentiful anywhere in the Black Sea and Hellespont, including Sinope. On the contrary, our knowledge of their cults in most of the cities there depends on a single inscription, as at Chersonesus, Olbia, Tyras and further afield. Accordingly, a single discovery in the Bosporan kingdom would change our impression very quickly. And, in a sense, there was such a discovery in the 1980s, at Nymphaeum. This was not an inscription on stone, but a fresco, bearing images and inscriptions of very different kinds.

### Isis the Trireme

The remarkable wall-painting was found at Nymphaeum, south of Panticapaeum in the Bosporan kingdom. It is incomplete, but the design includes a substantial trireme (1.20 m in length), which is well preserved. This trireme is usually identified as 'Isis', because the name of the goddess is deeply incised in large letters (with notable serifs) on the upper side of its prow. Unsurprisingly, the image has been the subject of much discussion, mostly by those concerned with ancient ships, or those who seek in this image access to diplomatic relationships between the Bosporans and the Ptolemies. However, despite this considerable attention, the significance of the image remains obscure.<sup>84</sup> First, some broad observations may be helpful. We must be clear that the trireme itself is part of a much larger design. For the extant decoration covered an area of some fifteen square

<sup>82</sup> IK Sinope 103 with Barat (2011); cf. Vidman (1969) 328–33. Dunand's map 1 gives a useful general idea of Isis-related cult in Asia Minor, including the southern and western Black Sea, while most of the northern shore, including the Bosporan kingdom and Chersonesus, is blank: Dunand (1973).

<sup>83</sup> Takács (1995) 265. On possible confusion with Memphite Sinopion, see Gwyn Griffith (1970) 396; Stambaugh (1972) 6–13.

<sup>84</sup> See Bricault (2006); cf. more generally, Marquaille (2008).



Figure 9 Nymphaeum fresco; detail at trireme prow: ISIS, Dioscurus, horse.  
 Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Svetlana Suetova

metres. The lower portion of the walls seems to have been left white, as also perhaps some of the upper portion. Apparently the polychrome painting ran primarily around the middle level of the walls, which had a background of bright yellow and red in transverse strips, while remnants of more detailed patterning are also visible. Thanks to the remarkable efforts of the Hermitage restorers, we have a strong sense of the design of one wall, with parts of two adjoining walls. There is also a substantial number of further fragments, especially in red. Some of these bear images, including what seems to be the painted ram of second trireme. Accordingly, in considering the extant trireme, we are looking at what may very well be a fairly small – if striking – feature of the room as a whole. Moreover, its location towards an upper corner also suggests that this trireme did not dominate the design of the room, at least not on its own. However, the decoration of the room would be very simple indeed without this vessel and its concomitant inscribed name, *Isis* (which need not be contemporary with the image of the trireme).

This simple décor points up another remarkable feature of the room, namely its abundance of graffiti in both text and sketch-images. These are abundant, and might be imagined as a response to the large amount of

empty painted space on the walls. We now appreciate that in antiquity the addition of graffiti was probably more acceptable than might be imagined.<sup>85</sup> However, in our room, located in a prime site overlooking the sea on the acropolis of Nymphaeum, it remains a matter of some doubt how the graffiti came to be added to the painted decoration. Very clear, however, in these extraordinary remains is the overwhelming concern with the sea. In addition to the painted trireme(s), sailing ships proliferate, scratched across the painted spaces, with their sails bellied out by following winds. At the prow of the extant trireme, a large male figure has been scratched, evidently mounted on a horse: his characteristic *pilos* headgear and associated horse leave no real doubt that he is one of the Dioscuri, the particular protecting deities of sailors. He is presumably envisaged as a protector of the vessel. Moreover, the texts scratched across empty painted space seem repeatedly to call for and celebrate fair sailing.<sup>86</sup> The location of this building above the sea, with harbour and beach to left and right could hardly be more appropriate. Nymphaeum was renowned as a harbour.<sup>87</sup> However we are to understand this structure and its functions, the sea and sailing must be central to any interpretation.<sup>88</sup> Small wonder that the excavator (Nonna Grach) saw here a building in the cult of Aphrodite, in view of her marine aspects and the appearance of her name among the graffiti, albeit in the company of Apollo.<sup>89</sup> At this key spot, the building jostled for space with major public structures, still under excavation. The Bosporan king's involvement in its construction (however intense or limited) is indicated by the royal stamp that recurs on its tiles, among which some Sinopian tiles seem to have been reused too. Meanwhile, the names Satyrus and Paerisades appear among the graffiti, together with other names which may relate to members of the dynasty and their entourage. Accordingly, the complex as a whole is notably well built on a high socle. In sum, this is a fine building in a fine spot, with visible royal connections.

Fundamental questions, however, remain to be answered about this Bosporan 'sanctuary of Aphrodite' (as it is sometimes boldly described), and about the image of the trireme *Isis* within it. For we are wholly unclear how these graffiti and sketches came to be scribbled on these walls. We may

<sup>85</sup> See Benefiel and Keegan (2016) with the literature there cited. We hear of at least one king (lovesick Thracian Sitalces) scrawling on his own walls, if only in Aristophanic comedy, well elucidated by Kruschwitz (2010).

<sup>86</sup> The full publication of these graffiti (in preparation by S. R. Tokhtas'yev) is eagerly awaited.

<sup>87</sup> Strabo 7. 4. 4.

<sup>88</sup> SEG 45. 997; Höckmann (1999). On language, SEG 59. 825.

<sup>89</sup> Grach (1984).

doubt the regular assumption that the graffiti were more or less contemporary with the trireme, and that the graffiti suggest a date around 275–250 BC, although we do not have any sounder view. However, the Bosporan royal names need not refer to the first Paerisades, as usually asserted: there were five in all. One should also bear in mind that not all the graffiti have been published. Meanwhile, apart from the graffiti and perhaps the name of the ship, there seems to be no indication that the building was indeed of a religious nature. Accordingly, we may reasonably wonder what kind of royally supported, major structure this may have been. The graffiti could (but need not) suggest a measure of neglect or disorder, so that we might consider perhaps the tumultuous years of the later third century BC, and the civil war that brought Eumelus to power, as a likely time in which they might be scrawled. Uncertainty reigns.

Aside from these large matters, scholars have been much more interested in *Isis* itself. The excavator was impressed by the detail of the painting of the trireme, though its imprecisions have subsequently become more apparent. She inferred that the artist had seen this very ship in life, while its name suggested to her a ship from Egypt.<sup>90</sup> Her bold suggestion, that this was a ship which had actually arrived in the Bosphorus from Egypt, a long voyage for a trireme, was received with enthusiasm, especially in the light of the Bosporan envoys to Ptolemy Philadelphus attested in a papyrus from Egypt, dated to 254 BC. Soon it became orthodox to believe that the ship painted in this ‘sanctuary of Aphrodite’ at Nymphaeum was an actual ship which had brought Ptolemaic emissaries to conduct diplomacy in the Bosphorus, whether at Nymphaeum itself or up the coast at Panticapaeum. And that in turn could be combined with the papyrus to build an engaging narrative of busy Bosporan diplomacy with Ptolemy II through these years. This is a marvellous scenario, which has attracted further learned embellishment.<sup>91</sup> However, our fresco offers scant support for these great claims. Certainly, there is every possibility that Ptolemaic envoys visited the Bosporan kingdom, not least to invite attendance at the Ptolemaia, for example. The Bosporan kingdom was a force in the world, and the Ptolemies will have wished to keep it on side as much as possible. Ptolemaic ambitions towards the Black Sea are clear enough,<sup>92</sup> while the Bosporans also had their own interests around the Aegean and beyond. Diplomatic activity is assured, while the Ptolemaic signet rings which have

<sup>90</sup> She also claimed other Egyptian features, but unpersuasively.

<sup>91</sup> Notably, Treister (1985) holds that the oval shields on the trireme are part of a larger tale of Bosporan-Ptolemaic influences; Kazakevich (2012) 186–7 is rightly sceptical.

<sup>92</sup> See below, p. 172.

been found in burials at Panticapaeum seem to confirm it, along with the papyrus of 254.<sup>93</sup> However, it is not at all clear that the fresco had any direct connection with that diplomatic process. It is a fine painting, to be sure, but there is no particular reason to think that it was painted from life. Nor is there anything particularly Ptolemaic about it, except insofar as it bears the name 'Isis'. Moreover, it remains wholly unclear why a visiting Ptolemaic trireme might have been thought a fit subject for the wall of a sanctuary of Aphrodite, if that is indeed the nature of this building.

Our best hope of understanding the significance of the fresco, given all the lacunae in our knowledge, must reside in the name of the vessel. It can hardly be coincidence that, among the many faces and associations of the goddess Isis, maritime matters are very much to the fore. At the most basic level, 'Isis' was an appropriate name for a ship. The so-called aretalogies of Isis have survived from the second century BC onwards, the earliest being one from Maronea on the Aegean coast of Thrace. It has been well observed that all these come from Greek ports. And they include prominently among the powers of the goddess her role in sailing and maritime commerce.<sup>94</sup> This is a key feature of her syncretism with Aphrodite, as we have observed. At Nymphaeum, therefore, the goddess would be very much in place, in a famous port and with Aphrodite, if the building is indeed hers. The theme of ships and sailing abound on these walls, as we have seen. Of course, we do not see the goddess herself, if 'Isis' is indeed the name of the trireme. And yet we may also wonder whether the name can ever be divorced entirely from the deity.

At this point a word is required about Lucian's dialogue, *The Ship or Wishes*, since it has been given a central place in analysis of the fresco from its first publication onwards. The dialogue seemed to have an obvious relevance, because it concerns a ship named 'Isis'. It begins with the arrival of this 'Isis' in Piraeus. Lucian's evocation of the extreme local interest aroused by the vessel evidently played a large part in encouraging the idea that the ship at Nymphaeum was painted from life – a painting prompted, it was argued, by similar excitement there. However, on closer examination it becomes clear that the dialogue offers little assistance, even if we overlook Lucian's familiarly slippery and ironic manner, which always tends to raise a question about any sense of reality in his works. In this particular case, the whole account of the ship is a learned literary construct, formed from a set of allusions to earlier works, notably those of Plato.<sup>95</sup> All sense

<sup>93</sup> On these rings, Treister (1985) with bibliography.

<sup>94</sup> Martzavou (2012).

<sup>95</sup> Houston (1987).



of reality soon evaporates, and with it any value in comparing Lucian's vessel with our fresco. First, Lucian's ship is an implausibly huge merchant vessel, while the Nymphaeum ship is a trireme: attempts to infer that the painted trireme too was the depiction of a very large vessel do not really convince, while varying estimates of its size tend to highlight the uncertainty of extrapolations from the fresco.<sup>96</sup> Further, Lucian's ship is laden with a huge cargo of grain, which is a large part of its interest in the dialogue, which proceeds to explore fantasies of wealth, prosperity and power. That is important to the name of the ship, which is bringing grain from Egypt: we have seen that Isis was goddess of the harvest, after the manner of Demeter. Indeed, Lucian, whose text alludes both to Thucydides and Herodotus' story of Arion, may very well have expected his audience to recall Herodotus' identification of her with Demeter in book 2. Certainly, the trireme's name is suggestive of Egypt, but we must be clear that there is nothing else that need link the image to that land. Finally, the excitement aroused in Piraeus, according to Lucian's imaginary tale, is not simply a matter of the size of the vessel, nor of its great cargo of foodstuff, but also and importantly because the ship should not have come into Piraeus at all. Lucian makes it clear that this was a vessel shipping grain from Egypt to Rome, not Athens, and that it should normally have followed the coast of North Africa south of Crete. It is extreme weather that has brought this rarest of sights into harbour at Piraeus. Of course, we may wish to speculate that the trireme-painting shows a real (and huge) trireme which had caused similar excitement at Nymphaeum in coming as a rare visitor from Egypt, but there is nothing in Lucian's dialogue or the fresco that offers significant support to such a notion. True, an Egyptian vessel arriving at Nymphaeum might well have caused a stir, but that is an *a priori* inference, and it remains to explain why our painting may have been the result, especially as such a 'painting from life' is hard to parallel. As for the name *Isis*, there is some reason to suspect that Lucian incorporated it from the name of another ship, usually overlooked, which seems to be implied in Petronius' *Satyricon* a century or so earlier.<sup>97</sup>

A rather more helpful source of enlightenment might be the case of Timoleon and Corinth, which seems not to have been considered in this context. Here there is no mention of Isis as such, but instead we have Demeter and Kore, so that Isis is not so far away. Moreover, Isis was important at Corinth.<sup>98</sup> Plutarch narrates the story of Timoleon's

<sup>96</sup> On estimates, Bricault (2006).

<sup>97</sup> Houston (1987) 446 n. 9.

<sup>98</sup> Above, p. 142.

expedition to Sicily from Corinth in the middle of the fourth century B.C. Plutarch presents the expedition as surrounded with signs of divine favour (*Timoleon* 8):

When the fleet was ready, and the soldiers provided with what they needed, the priestesses of Persephone fancied they saw in their dream that goddess and her mother making ready for a journey, and heard them say that they were going to sail with Timoleon to Sicily. Therefore the Corinthians equipped a sacred trireme besides, and named it after the two goddesses. Furthermore, Timoleon himself journeyed to Delphi and sacrificed to the god, and as he descended into the place of the oracle, he received the following sign. From the votive offerings suspended there a fillet which had crowns and figures of Victory embroidered upon it slipped away and fell directly upon the head of Timoleon, so that it appeared as if he were being crowned by the god and thus sent forth upon his undertaking.

And now, with seven Corinthian ships, and two from Corcyra, and a tenth which the Leucadians furnished, he set sail.<sup>12</sup> And at night, after he had entered the open sea and was enjoying a favouring wind, the heavens seemed to burst open on a sudden above his ship, and to pour forth an abundant and conspicuous fire. From this a torch lifted itself on high, like those which the mystics bear, and running along with them on their course, darted down upon precisely that part of Italy towards which the pilots were steering. The soothsayers declared that the apparition bore witness to the dreams of the priestesses, and that the goddesses were taking part in the expedition and showing forth the light from heaven; for Sicily, they said, was sacred to Persephone, since mythology makes it the scene of her rape; and the island was given to her as a wedding present.

About a century earlier, Diodorus Siculus had presented Timoleon's expedition in similar terms, though with differing details. He agrees that Timoleon had a trireme named after Demeter and Kore, but on his version it is Timoleon himself who names it – the best of his triremes – after he has set sail.<sup>99</sup> Both accounts concur, however, in the idea that the ship was named after the goddesses in consequence of their apparent support for a naval expedition, as manifested by a dream and other signs. This is a trireme, as on our fresco. Accordingly, this neglected trireme of Timoleon might suggest a quite different interpretation of the fresco not in terms of Ptolemaic diplomacy but in terms of Isis herself, perhaps particularly as powerful marine deity. If that is right, it will no longer suffice to regard the vessel as an arrival from outside the kingdom. Accordingly, we should include the Bosporan kingdom too among the places where Isis' cult is

<sup>99</sup> Diod. 16. 66; Bicknell (1984). On Isis, Demeter and Kore at Corinth, Bookidis (2003) esp. 257.



attested, because without local commitment to Isis at an influential level, it is hard to see how the fresco could have been placed in this royally tiled building at a prime site in Nymphaeum. Indeed, we might wonder too (on Timoleon's model) whether – if this was indeed the temple of Aphrodite – her ministrants had dreamed of Isis, so often her alter ego in shipping.

Timoleon's trireme went on an actual expedition, but the trireme depicted at Nymphaeum may have taken a voyage which was more a matter of religion than naval militarism. For we should bear in mind the graffiti which the fresco attracted, with an emphasis on setting sail and a fair voyage. Of course, the relationship between the fresco and the subsequent graffiti remains obscure, but an explanation which accounted for both, together with the name 'Isis' would be most desirable. And Apuleius may offer that, despite the fact that his account was written some half a millennium after the fresco was painted. For Apuleius describes in some detail the key festival of Isis known in Latin as the Navigium and in Greek as Ploiaphesia. This was the ritual which opened the sailing-season each spring, a context which would suit many of the graffiti, and so help to explain their presence.<sup>100</sup> If that festival is indeed the subject of the fresco, then we must set it beside other problematic images of the rite, particularly two claimed at first-century AD Pompeii and third-century AD Antioch on the Orontes.<sup>101</sup> Apuleius offers the nearest we have to a description of the festival, in the second century AD, where the maritime significance is clear.<sup>102</sup>

This is the culmination of Apuleius' remarkable tale of Lucius, who finally in book II ceases to have the form of a donkey when, thanks to Isis, he is turned back into a man through initiation in her cult. The action is set at Cenchreae, located near Corinth, but crucially located to its east on the Saronic Gulf. The fiction provides enormous detail on Isis and her Ploiaphesia, for this festival is the immediate context for Lucius' return to human form (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* II. 1–12). Of course, fiction is an uncomfortable friend for the historian, but here the fiction requires that this is a credible and convincing version of such a festival at Cenchreae, so that its historicity does not much affect our larger concern with how the Ploiaphesia was thought to be celebrated.

<sup>100</sup> Semyonov (1995) raised the Ploiaphesia's possible relevance, but his short paper has been generally overlooked.

<sup>101</sup> On these Gwyn Griffith (1975) 44–5 offers cautious assessment.

<sup>102</sup> On timings, Beresford (2013) 40–2, noting also a comparable festival at Ostia for the Dioscuri.

Isis appears in the night to Lucius at the beginning of book 11 as an all-powerful, all embracing deity with a strong marine element, as her total power required. She instructed the hapless Lucius on what he must do on the following day, at her Ploiaphesia:

The day which will be born of this night has been consecrated to me by immemorial religious usage. It is the day on which the tempests of winter have abated and the stormy sea-waves have subsided, when the ocean is again navigable and my priests sacrifice a brand-new ship as the first-offering of the season's trade. It is this ceremony that you must await without anxiety and without unholy thoughts. (tr. E. J. Kenney)

Soon we are shown the festal procession in substantial detail. It culminates in the launching of a special ship, which is described in outline:

During all this, amid a roar of joyful invocations, our gradual progress had brought us to the seashore, to the very spot where as an ass I had been stabled the night before. The images of the gods were first set out as the ritual prescribed. There stood a ship, a triumph of craftsmanship, its sides decorated with marvellous Egyptian paintings: the high priest, after first pronouncing a solemn prayer from his chaste lips, with the utmost ceremony purified it with a flaming torch, an egg, and sulphur, named it, and consecrated it to the great goddess. The resplendent sail of this happy vessel displayed letters embroidered in gold repeating the prayer for the new sailing season and successful navigation. The mast, shaped from a pine-trunk, was already stepped and towered aloft, a splendid sight with its distinctive top. The poop was curved in a goose-neck and was plated with shining gold, and the whole hull was of citrus-wood, highly polished to a glowing finish. All the people, initiates and uninitiated alike, then vied with each other to pile up on board baskets heaped with perfumes and other similar offerings, and also poured libations of milk-porridge into the sea. At length, stowed full with this wealth of gifts and propitious offerings, the ship was cast off from her moorings and put out to sea before a gentle breeze. When she had sailed too far for us to be able to make her out, the bearers of the sacred objects took up again what each had brought and returned happily to the temple in the same orderly procession. (tr. E. J. Kenney)

The type of ship involved here is unclear, but it is no merchant vessel. The high poop deck and general splendour of the vessel might better suit a trireme, but in truth Apuleius' purpose here is primarily to make clear that the ship is special.

The festival described by Apuleius centres upon the launch of a ship. Its type is not stated, but a trireme might seem rather more grand and appropriate to the fine occasion than a merchant vessel. We should note its high poop deck. However, its size is nowhere stated, and it is not clear

whether it has a crew, though without a crew it could not be counted upon smoothly to head off to sea, even with favourable winds. The fact that it can sail off into the distance with items on board at least shows that it was not a miniature. Its mast seems substantial enough too. Its sail, we are told, bore words about good sailing; we might compare the pithy graffiti at Nymphaeum. Is this festival the clue to the interpretation of the fresco? There seems nothing against the idea and quite a lot for it. The fact that the fresco trireme was painted at all, apparently in a temple of Aphrodite, would immediately be explained, if this were a representation of the ship of the Ploiaphesia, whereas the painting there of a diplomatic vessel would be more difficult to explain. The name Isis would be entirely appropriate, since the ship was dedicated to her, rather as in a different context Timoleon's ship was dedicated to Demeter and Kore. Obviously, some details in Apuleius' tale are different from the fresco image: there is no sign of a lettered sail on the fresco and no name is mentioned on Apuleius' vessel. Obviously too, however, these are minor matters that do not undermine the possibility of a link between the two, especially across half a millennium and different forms of imaginative representation, namely painting and literary art.

This line of interpretation finds further support from the fact that we know triremes to have had a particular relevance to Isis' cult. Her priesthoods might include not only a nauarch, but also a trierarch.<sup>103</sup> In the late Hellenistic period, for example, *thiasotai* of Isis at Bithynian Cius on the south coast of the Black Sea honoured a man (who sported the appropriate name, Anoubion) who had held the position of trierarch and other offices in the cult of Isis there.<sup>104</sup> Doubtless these priests with naval officers' titles featured prominently at celebrations of the Ploiaphesia: it is a pity that Apuleius gives no more information about that.<sup>105</sup> We may observe also the *hieronautai* at Tomis c. AD 200, where the fragmentary inscription at least makes clear that Isis-cult is involved.<sup>106</sup> In the Bosphorus we have no trierarch of any kind to date, but we do have nauarchs, one of whom made a dedication to Poseidon and Aphrodite Nauarkhis at Panticapaeum, whether as a naval commander or, possibly, as a cult official.<sup>107</sup> Clearly, the

<sup>103</sup> Vidman (1966); cf. Veligianni (1986) on such a trierarch at Amphipolis, honoured for his fine performance of the office in 67/6 BC.

<sup>104</sup> IK Cius 22, perhaps under the Principate.

<sup>105</sup> Note IK Byzantion 324, where a nauarch oversees the festival in some sense.

<sup>106</sup> ISM II 98, where we have also *pastophoroi*; cf. *hieronautai* from Tyre on Delos in the fourth century BC: *Inscr. Delos* 50.

<sup>107</sup> CIRB 30: there is no indication that Isis herself is involved here.

interpretation of the trireme painting, its physical context and meaning, remains a mystery, but the foregoing considerations seem at least to open the way to an interpretation in terms of ritual and religion (including Isis' cult) which may be a more satisfactory line of enquiry than the alleged impact of a Ptolemaic vessel.

Perhaps some might think that the Bosphorus and perhaps the Pontic world more generally were unlikely to celebrate the Ploiaphesia, despite the hazards of the Black Sea, which made divine protection all the more desirable for seafarers. However, such doubts would be unwarranted. For we happen to know that the Ploiaphesia was celebrated at Byzantium early in the first century AD, thanks to rare epigraphic testimony.<sup>108</sup> The Christian polemic of Lactantius reminds us too that Isis was also Io, and so had a particular place in the Thracian and Crimean Bosphorus, not least with regard to any Ploiaphesia.<sup>109</sup> Eager to expose inconsistency, Lactantius finds a flaw, but in so doing also illustrates these links for us:

In the same manner, it is related that he changed Io, the daughter of Inachus, into a heifer. And in order that she might escape the anger of Juno, just as she was, now covered with bristly hair, and in the shape of a heifer, she is said to have swam over the sea, and to have come into Egypt; and there, having recovered her former appearance, she became the goddess who is now called Isis. By what argument, then, can it be proved that Europa did not sit on the bull, and that Io was not changed into a heifer? Because there is a fixed day in the annals on which the voyage of Isis is celebrated; from which fact we learn that she did not swim across the sea, but sailed over it. (Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* I. II. 20)

The principal obstacle to interpreting the fresco trireme in terms of the Ploiaphesia is that we have no strong evidence of the cult of Isis there or elsewhere around the cities of the kingdom, such as we now have at Chersonesus, Olbia and so on. However, that is not in any way decisive, for our knowledge of Isis in many of these cities depends on a single inscription. Nor is it an obstacle that the kingdom was not under Ptolemaic control: it will suffice to consider Istros, close to the south of the Danube estuary, where much hangs on a single inscription and where there is also no question of Ptolemaic control. This inscription, dated to the third century BC, shows the city sending an official delegation to Chalcedon with regard to Isis' familiar partner, Serapis, apparently to consult the oracle of Apollo

<sup>108</sup> IK Byzantion, 324; Vidman (1969) 59; (1970) 77.

<sup>109</sup> This was not only her crossing but also her genealogy, Byzas being her descendant: further below p. 172.

there.<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately, the inscription is too fragmentary to reveal much detail, but it is usually taken to show Istros in the process of establishing its own cult of the goddess.<sup>111</sup> And that is all the more interesting because Istros was not under the direct control of the Ptolemies. The inscription offers strong support for the view (now surely the orthodoxy) that the spread of these Egyptian cults was not a process of Ptolemaic imposition, as sometimes argued. Meanwhile, that orthodoxy finds yet more support when we consider the spread of Syrian Atargatis in the Greek world: there seems (rightly) never to have been a scholarly appetite for the possibility that her cult was driven by Seleucid ambitions.<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, still earlier and still closer to the Bosphorus, we have the enigmatic tradition that Ptolemy I Soter had taken the cult-statue of Serapis at Alexandria from Sinope.<sup>113</sup> Although the tradition was evidently supported in Alexandria under the Principate, we may well share the suspicions of those scholars who suppose the notion to have been a confusion. In any case, Plutarch is very clear that the statue was not understood as Serapis when it was in Sinope: he relates how Ptolemy's regime changed its identification (*On Isis and Osiris* 361f–362a). Be that as it may, the conquests of Alexander and emergence of the Ptolemies had certainly made the deities of Egypt much more prominent in the Greek world. And, as the fresco trireme's name indicates, that included the Greeks of the Black Sea. We have already observed an inscription from Crimean Chersonesus which is broadly contemporary with our trireme, but need not of course be connected with it in any direct way.<sup>114</sup> Evidently, we are dealing with matters of religion which should not be reduced to a feature of power politics. What we seem to have here, as more generally with the spread of these Egyptian cults, is the converging process of political and military success, on the one hand, and religious development, on the

<sup>110</sup> ISM 1. 5; cf. SEG 50. 682; Bricault (2007b), 249–50. On such consultations about cults, see Parker (2011) 265–72.

<sup>111</sup> Dunand 1. 68–9. The inscription would not have been made unless the mission had ended in the establishment of the cult: cf. Vinogradov and Zolotaryov (2000) 290–1 against arguments to the contrary.

<sup>112</sup> See Lightfoot (2003) esp. 44–50 on Atargatis on Delos, urging the roles of merchants, mercenaries, slaves and the like.

<sup>113</sup> Magie (1953) esp. 168 sets out the evidence on that tradition in detail, primarily Tac. *Hist.* 4. 83–4 and Plutarch, esp. *De Is.* 28 (cf. Gwyn Griffiths ad loc.), and notes its various important inconsistencies. Still useful too is Amelung (1903). On Sinopion in Egypt, see n. 84 of this chapter.

<sup>114</sup> SEG 50. 691: it is cut on a thin marble slab (25.8 × 17.4 × 7.4 cm) which apparently formed part of the facing of an altar to those deities: cf. Vinogradov and Zolotaryov (1999) and (2000) striving to link it to the fresco.

other, all played out in the context of a certain fashion for the products of Alexandria more generally, including artefacts imported from there and literary creations too.<sup>115</sup>

In that regard, we should observe the energetic activities of the early Ptolemies in projecting their influence into the Black Sea. At Byzantium, according to Dionysius Periegetes (*Anaplous* 41), Ptolemy Philadelphus bestowed so much upon the city (money, military hardware, land in Asia and enormous amounts of grain) that the city gave him honours ‘equal to a god’ (*isa theōi*).<sup>116</sup> Now the discovery of the epitaph of a Byzantine actor at Tomis, albeit of Roman imperial date, has improved our understanding of the ideological background of Ptolemaic dealings with Byzantium.<sup>117</sup> For not only does this individual illustrate the Byzantine links into the Black Sea (which are obvious enough, though seldom stressed sufficiently), but his epitaph refers to Byzantium as the ‘land of Inachus’. The allusion must be to Io, daughter of Inachus, and her crossing of the Thracian Bosphorus.<sup>118</sup> And that in turn confirms the interpretation of the iconography of Byzantine coinage from the fifth century BC, with its prominent bovine above a dolphin, as alluding to Io’s crossing there.<sup>119</sup> However, it was probably not so much her crossing that made Byzantium ‘Inachian’: still more important was the genealogy that made Byzas, the eponymous founder, a descendant of Io, so that this was not only a matter of geography, but also blood.<sup>120</sup> Of course, all this offered a major opportunity for kinship diplomacy between Byzantium and Philadelphus: we may be sure that the Inachian connection through Io-Isis bulked large in the exchanges between the city and the king.

Meanwhile, Apollonius Rhodius seems to have written his Argonautic epic at Alexandria, close to the king.<sup>121</sup> And at Heraclea Pontica, Memnon mentions a Ptolemy (probably Philadelphus)<sup>122</sup> who had attained such a height of prosperity that he bestowed his generosity on Greek cities, including Heraclea Pontica, which received a lot of grain and a temple on

<sup>115</sup> Imports from Egypt do not include the much-cited ‘Hadra’ vessels, which are Cretan: Callaghan (1978); Callaghan and Jones (1985).

<sup>116</sup> Fraser (1972) 2. 290 n. 308. Cf. Avram (2004).

<sup>117</sup> Russell (2012) with earlier literature.

<sup>118</sup> Further, p. 143.

<sup>119</sup> Russell (2012): of course, that mythological view does not exclude real cattle being important to the local economy, as also at Chalcedon opposite; cf. Merkelbach and Stauber (2001) 221 (*Anth. Pal.* 7. 169), the view from that side of the straits.

<sup>120</sup> Russell (2012) collects the mythological tradition, rather late (as we have it).

<sup>121</sup> Further, e.g. Hunter (1989) 4–5.

<sup>122</sup> Habicht (1970) 116–21.

its acropolis of Proconnesian marble for its civic god, Heracles (FGH 434 F17). Although our information is rather scrappy, the diplomatic offensive of the early Ptolemies is very clear in southwestern portion of the Black Sea. We may well wonder which other Pontic cities besides Heraclea had benefited from the Ptolemaic euergetism mentioned by Memnon. There is every reason to suppose that it would have reached across the whole region. In that context the Ptolemaic images that appear at Panticapaeum are very suggestive of Ptolemaic overtures to the Bosporean elite. These occur on rings for the most part. However, we should observe also the remarkable bust, in basalt, of a Ptolemaic queen who may well be Arsinoe II, reportedly found in central Panticapaeum.<sup>123</sup>

All this serves to illustrate the environment of Ptolemaic imperialism and diplomacy within which the cult of Isis, with and without her associates, developed in the Bosporean kingdom, together with much else from Alexandria.<sup>124</sup> It may well have been at this time too that the notion arose that the Taurians had gained their name from Osiris, yoking bulls to plough in the Crimea, even if we only hear of it much later. Meanwhile, together with diplomacy and trade, we should include also mercenaries in our understanding of contact between the Bosporeans and the Ptolemies. A fragmentary inscription of somewhere around 250 BC from the Fayum shows two Bosporeans in what seems to have been a substantial list, well cut in large letters in marble (IFayum 3. 193). One is named Philonichos (*sic*) and the other Molpagoras, while each is identified simply as a Bosporean (*Bosporiths*) without a patronymic. They appear, separately, with an Athenian, an Acarnanian, a Mytilenian and four Rhodians: these individuals are not grouped according to their origins. The quality of the inscription has been taken, rather unwarrantedly, to count against their being mercenaries, but it is not at all clear what else this motley assortment may have been.<sup>125</sup> At the very least, the inscription shows the presence of Bosporeans in Egypt under the early Ptolemies. And there were doubtless others too. Later, a papyrus of the second century BC survives sufficiently to show us a Bosporean cavalryman of the Ptolemaic army, again listed with Greeks of other regions, mostly in the north (Thessalians, Macedonians,

<sup>123</sup> Touraieff (1911) 27. It was sent to the Hermitage with the Novikov collection, but was found in central Kerch.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Marquaille (2008).

<sup>125</sup> Vinogradov and Zolotaryov (2000) rightly showing the weaknesses in Litvinenko (1991), but offering instead a fantastic reconstruction of events which depends on the name Molpagoras, which is not rare enough to bear this weight of speculation.

Perinthians and so on). The papyrus shows him at the age of 58, settled in Egypt as a farmer.<sup>126</sup>

In the Euxine and Mediterranean worlds, the cult of Isis (with and without her associates) remained strong long after the Ptolemies had passed into history. That important fact tends further to confirm that the emergence of her cult was about more than Ptolemaic imperialism and diplomacy. However, we must be clear too that Isis has not left any substantial mark in the later archaeology of the Bosporan kingdom, especially when we compare her slight presence there with the relatively abundant evidence from Asia Minor and elsewhere about Isis and Serapis. In the Bosphorus a rare glimpse of the goddess is provided by a small bronze bust (9.1 cm high) found at Gorgippia: it was produced around AD 200 and was part of the debris of a house which collapsed around fifty years later. In addition, a similar bust was found in a tomb of Panticapaeum in the nineteenth century, but it has been lost and only scant information survives about it.<sup>127</sup> We saw in both Gorgippia and Panticapaeum traces of the cult of Aphrodite Nauarkhis, and its possible links to the cult of Isis and the challenging fresco of Nymphaeum. In Gorgippia the Bosporan governor of the city erected a temple for Aphrodite Nauarkhis in AD 110 (CIRB 115), while in Panticapaeum a dedication to the goddess (with Poseidon) has survived from the later first century BC.<sup>128</sup>

We must reckon also with the important remains from Gurzuf Sedlo, which we identified as probably the major cult-centre of Parthenos in the Taurian mountains.<sup>129</sup> Despite the wealth of material evidence from this mountain site, the complex and its rituals remain highly enigmatic. However, two of the finest votives unearthed there are images of Isis, dated to the earlier Principate. One is a miniature bronze bust, broadly comparable with the other Bosporan examples. In this case the goddess wears a tunic, with substantial bare shoulders and a powerful neck. Her identification as Isis is established by her head, with its braided hair, drawn back into a bun, and her crescent headdress. The second is a statuette of gilded silver (5 cm high), depicting the deity in a long garment and cloak knotted at the chest and tossed across the right shoulder. She holds a rattle in her lowered right hand and a cornucopia in her left, clasped to her chest and leaning on a column. Her face is plump and her hair falls in luxuriant locks

<sup>126</sup> We have the papyrus in two fragments (*BGU* XIV 2423 fr. A col. i. 9 + *BGUX* (1938)), where he is called a *Bosporitēs*. Further, Scheuble-Reiter (2012) 361–4.

<sup>127</sup> Kruglikova (1971).

<sup>128</sup> CIRB 30: the nauarch here may be a cult official: see above.

<sup>129</sup> Above, p. 34.





Figure 10 Isis bust from Gurzuf. N. G. Novichenkova, Yalta Regional Museum

over her neck. Unfortunately, we have no headdress, only a conical hole where it would have been inserted. Accordingly, there remains room for doubt as to whether this is indeed Isis, especially in view of the images of Tyche and other deities that proliferate at the site. The plethora of images of so many gods and goddesses make it hard to infer much from these two images of Isis, which would have attracted rather less attention if they had not been of such quality. Certainly there is no reason to think of Isis to have been of any special importance at Gurzuf Sedlo, though, for all that, we should observe the excavator's suspicion that their respective locations occupied meaningful, cardinal points in the arrangement of the cult site. It is becoming ever clearer that Isis was quite widespread in the Bosporan kingdom of the Roman period.<sup>130</sup>

A further glimpse of Isis, and also of Serapis, is provided by Bosporan coinage of the late first century BC, which has often been attributed to

<sup>130</sup> The clearest summary of all this is Novichenkova (1996); cf. (2008); (2015); further on the images, Treister (1998) esp. 71, noting unpublished or obscure images of Isis found in modern times also at Tanais and elsewhere. On an image from Chersonesus, Ryzhov (1992).

Queen Dynamis.<sup>131</sup> These coins are especially interesting because they suggest that these deities were not only of sufficient significance to feature on royal coinage, but were also embedded in the wider pantheon of Bosporan gods and goddesses by that time. For this ruler, whether Dynamis or not, issued a series of types featuring familiar Greek deities – Artemis, Hermes, Poseidon, Dionysus, Heracles and so on – as well as deities of Egyptian origin. One coin shows Zeus Ammon on the obverse,<sup>132</sup> and a serpent wearing a crown of Isis on the reverse.<sup>133</sup> Another shows Serapis on the obverse and a cornucopia on the reverse.<sup>134</sup> Taken as a whole, this coinage shows Isis and Serapis (and indeed Zeus Ammon) well established in the Bosporan pantheon. Although these deities had come from Egypt, they seem to have been brought into Bosporan religion and accepted there to the extent that they were used on royal coinage among the various other deities of the kingdom.<sup>135</sup>

Given these coins, we can hardly be surprised to find Serapis depicted on artefacts, especially lamps, found in the Bosporan kingdom and neighbouring Chersonesus in the Roman period, seemingly imports from Egypt.<sup>136</sup> Various statuettes and figurines of Isis and her circle are also known from the Bosporan kingdom and across the north coast of the Black Sea, which seem to testify further to her presence there.<sup>137</sup> These too were imports from Egypt.<sup>138</sup> And they also give some context for the bust from Gorgippia, which is sufficiently different in coiffure and dress to raise the possibility that she is not simply Isis, but a Roman empress wearing Isis' crown.<sup>139</sup> In general, all these imported images show Isis and her circle in the region, but it remains most unclear how far their presence attests religious or even political concern with the deity, as opposed to a taste for Egyptiana that the Bosphorus evidently shared with the rest of the Roman empire at this time.<sup>140</sup> However, the royal coinage of the late first

<sup>131</sup> On the problematic monograms, see Frolova and Ireland (2002) 7. On Ammon in archaic Greek culture and Libya, Vlassopoulos (2013).

<sup>132</sup> He is otherwise poorly represented in the material culture of the region: Kobylina (1976) 41.

<sup>133</sup> Frolova and Ireland (2002) 55.

<sup>134</sup> Frolova and Ireland (2002) 59; cf. 61, different only in detail.

<sup>135</sup> While Mithridates Eupator may have encouraged Serapis in the Bosphorus, as often asserted, there is no need to see in this coinage some obscure political agenda, *pace* Kobylina (1976) 36.

<sup>136</sup> Kobylina (1976) 36–7.

<sup>137</sup> Harpocrates was especially popular; Isis' Eros: Kobylina (1976) 38–41, esp. on Aphrodite-Eros and Isis-Harpocrates in the region. Further, Sanders et al. (2013) with bibliography.

<sup>138</sup> Kobylina (1976) 37–8.

<sup>139</sup> Kobylina (1976) 38.

<sup>140</sup> For that reason, it seems, Kobylina (1976) 34–5 excludes amulets from her study, though the key problem with these is rather to establish their provenance. Cf. Faraone (1991).

century BC, together with the fresco from Nymphaeum, possibly showing the Ploiaphesia, suggests that these various images and trinkets should be understood not simply as matters of fashion, but also as traces of religious belief in the Bosporus.

### Bosporans in Egypt, 254 BC

A papyrus from the Fayum in Egypt informs us of a strange group of visitors to the area about whom we would otherwise know nothing and probably would never even have begun to imagine.<sup>141</sup> This is a short letter of instruction sent in autumn 254 BC by a high official of the Ptolemaic administration (the *dioecetes* Apollonius) to Zenon, his agent in the Arsinoite nome (the Fayum), telling him to provide the necessary transport that the visitors will need when they reach the town of Ptolemais. For at that point the group would leave the barges that had brought them in comfort up the Nile, so as to visit the watery Fayum. While pyramids were the great attraction lower down the Nile, at Giza to the north of the Fayum, here it was not so much an occasional further pyramid as the cult of the crocodile-god Sobek that was most remarkable, apparently centred at the town of Arsinoe, but widespread across the nome.<sup>142</sup> Important here too was the cult of Isis Nepherses, whose links to Sobek were significant, even if unclear in detail.<sup>143</sup>

Apollonius to Zenon, greetings.

As soon as you read this letter, send to Ptolemais the carriages and the rest of the transport support and the baggage-mules for the envoys (*presbutai*) from Paerisades and the sacred envoys (*theōroi*) from Argos, whom the King has sent to see the possessions of the Arsinoite nome. And be sure that you are not late with them. For when we were writing you this letter they had already set off up the river. Farewell. [Dates follow and a note of receipt.]

There is much of interest in this otherwise mundane administrative instruction to supply land transport to the visitors when they put in at Ptolemais, evidently Ptolemais Hormou. The letter itself is probably not the first on the subject from Apollonius to Zenon: an earlier letter had evidently concerned the readying of the animals and carriages suitable for

<sup>141</sup> P. Lond. 7, from the portion of the Zenon Archive acquired by the British Museum. The well-preserved papyrus is dated to 21 September 254 BC. For much detail and earlier bibliography, see Skeat (1974) 62–6.

<sup>142</sup> Strabo 17.1.38, where Crocodilopolis is Arsinoe; P. Tebt. 1. 33; also Diod. 1. 69 on the broader attraction for Greeks of a visit to Egypt.

<sup>143</sup> Further, Bricault (1998).

the distinguished visitors. Perhaps more had been said about their visit too, which appears here as the initiative of the king, namely Ptolemy II Philadelphus. No further explanation was required by his functionaries. There has been much scholarly discussion about the respective locations of the two officials, but all have observed the sense of urgency in Apollonius' instructions, giving the impression that all was not quite in place.

Commentators have reasonably wondered why these visitors had come to Egypt. Certainly, Egypt had a strong attraction for any enquiring mind in antiquity, and for many different reasons. These included the Nile itself, with its size, mysterious source and floods in summer as well as winter, and the pyramids, which had exerted a fascination that we can document easily from Herodotus to Cicero and beyond.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, as well as the allure of Egypt's distant antiquity, there was also the large shadow of Alexander himself, which stretched from his city at Alexandria over much of the land. All these attractions and more made Egypt an unusually alluring place to visit. And our papyrus hints at the Ptolemies' use of all those assets to impress those who made a tour of the sights, while the Ptolemaic organisation that we glimpse here might also be counted as part of the strategy of impressing such visitors, however hurried some of the preparations may have been behind the scenes. It is easy to understand, therefore, why visitors might come to Egypt, and also why Ptolemy may have not only acquiesced in their requests to travel his extraordinary kingdom, but also taken the initiative to ensure that important visitors were given a tour to impress.

However, these visitors were more than tourists. And they were an odd company. On the one hand we have envoys from Paerisades II, king of the Bosphorus. It has been observed that he is not accorded the royal title in our papyrus. Conceivably, the Ptolemaic regime did not consider him particularly kingly: Ptolemy II was the king. However, it is hard to find an insult of any kind in a hasty note between officials, especially when the purpose of that note was to ensure that the Bosporan ruler's representatives were well treated. Meanwhile, the fact that the visitors are envoys seems to show that their primary destination was Ptolemy himself, presumably in Alexandria. These Bosporans had not come to Egypt to see the wonders of the land: that seems to have been a bonus, very possibly the initiative of Ptolemy, as Apollonius' words suggest. As for the Argives, it is clear that they too were more than tourists in Egypt. While the Bosporans are called envoys, these are *theōroi*, a term which indicates that they had been sent to

<sup>144</sup> Note e.g. the sights that caught Germanicus' attention: Tac. *Ann.* 2. 61 with Braund (2015b).

Egypt by Argos on a mission that was in some sense a matter of religion. The papyrus gives no hint of that mission, but again we should probably think that it was aimed at Alexandria, for, as with the Bosporans, the tour up the Nile seems to be Ptolemy's initiative. Accordingly, while it cannot be ruled out that this tour was some part of the sacred mission for Argos, the papyrus suggests that it was not the Argives' primary concern.<sup>145</sup> The duties of such sacred envoys ranged across, for example, delivering gifts to a religious location, or attending a festival or participating in sacrifices at such a festival. We know something of the activities of other sacred envoys on missions to Alexandria, including their deaths and epitaphs there.<sup>146</sup> The common thread in all the examples of their various missions is a substantial religious element, by contrast with *presbantai*, 'envoys'. On this distinction turns a reported piece of flattery from the third century BC, when it was suggested that 'sacred envoys' not merely 'envoys' should be sent to the rulers of Macedon: the suggestion entailed the flattery that these rulers were somehow divinities.<sup>147</sup> At the same time, that unusual instance tends further to extend the scope of what might be entailed in the mission of sacred envoys, and so our difficulties in making inferences from this term in isolation.

Meanwhile, we must observe a central peculiarity in the fact that these different parties were travelling together, apparently under the same Ptolemaic initiative. Their lands were far apart, with different systems and apparently different interests and primary objectives. While some religious issue concerned the Argives, modern scholars have struggled to imagine what might have brought the Bosporans. Where the Bosphorus is concerned, scholars routinely seek explanations in terms of grain-supply, despite the fact that the ability to supply grain on occasion was only one of the reasons why the Bosporan kingdom might matter.<sup>148</sup> Since Egypt commonly enjoyed a surplus of grain, that usual line of explanation has been modified into notions about the shared interest in grain in both regions,<sup>149</sup> and even competition between the Bosphorus and Egypt over grain-supply.<sup>150</sup> And yet there is no hint of such an issue in the papyrus, and there is something fundamentally unconvincing about the notion that

<sup>145</sup> Rostovtzeff (1928) compares the later mission of Eudoxus of Cyzicus as a *theōros*, attending games: further below.

<sup>146</sup> Fraser (1972) 2. 380 n. 324, esp. SEG 1. 366.

<sup>147</sup> Plut. *Demetrius* 11a. In general, Dimitrova (2008).

<sup>148</sup> Braund (2008a).

<sup>149</sup> Fraser (1972) 2. 290 n. 306 is wisely rather more restrained than those he cites.

<sup>150</sup> Treister (1985) shows both the strength of that scholarly tradition and its lack of any substance.

the Bosporans had been sent to Ptolemy in order to discuss the production and sale of grain.

All the more so, because the Argive *theōroi* would not fit easily into such discussions. Of course, in principle one might imagine that Ptolemy had found it convenient to send off the two parties together, without their having anything in common beyond an interest in the sights: that would involve less work for his officials, no doubt. But if his aim was to impress, then it was at least risky to lump together two unrelated parties into a single group and send them off together into the hinterland. Surely we would expect the parties to have travelled separately unless they had some connection between themselves in addition to their possibly separate business with Ptolemy. In fact, they did, as we have seen. The key link between Egypt, Argos and the Bosporan kingdom was Io. Accordingly, if we are to find the purposes of these two missions to Ptolemaic Egypt from Argos and the Bosphorus in 254 B.C., we should look to that important bond, shared by these three regions. At the very least, the two delegations had a common concern to see the land of Io-Isis, though that shared concern need not have constituted the entirety of their missions. As for the crocodile-god Sobek and the crocodiles of the Fayum, these particular visitors (perhaps especially the Argives) were presumably told that Sobek (alias Soukhos in Greek) might also be Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis herself.<sup>151</sup> At the same time, we have seen so much of Isis' special relationship with water that we should expect her cult to be of great significance in the watery Fayum, where it was indeed widespread.<sup>152</sup>

We do not know when the two sets of envoys had reached Alexandria or how long they had been there before our papyrus was written. It is also unclear how long they expected to stay in the kingdom. The two delegations are unlikely to have arrived together, though it is not out of the question that they had met en route, for example on Rhodes, an important staging-post for travel to Egypt.<sup>153</sup> There were topical reasons why envoys might come to Egypt around 255/4 B.C. Certainly there was a major inter-state military matter, namely the defeat of the Ptolemaic navy by the Rhodians, usually a staunch ally, and the consequent loss of Ephesus to Antiochus II about 255.<sup>154</sup> That will have been of some interest to the Bosporan king,

<sup>151</sup> Further, Zecchi (2010) esp. 94–103. On Sobek and Horus well before the Ptolemies, see e.g. P. Ramesseum 6, discussed by Zecchi.

<sup>152</sup> Further, Bricault (1998) esp. 527.

<sup>153</sup> In the second century B.C. Agatharchides indicated that many a merchant ship took ten days to reach Rhodes from the Sea of Azov and another four to then reach Alexandria in Egypt: Agath. *On the Erythraean Sea* 66; Fraser (1972) I. 172; Burstein (1989) ad loc.

<sup>154</sup> Gölbl (2001) 43–4.

particularly in view of the pivotal role of Rhodes in exchange networks that reached from Egypt to the Crimean Bosphorus.<sup>155</sup> And it seems that Antiochus II had his own Black Sea ambitions.<sup>156</sup> However, that can hardly have brought the sacred envoys of Argos to Alexandria, and there is no need to suppose that it was the only matter of interest to the Bosporan envoys either. Economic matters are unlikely to have been to the fore: neither Egypt nor the Bosporan kingdom had much need of the other in economic terms, even if a few items did move between them.<sup>157</sup> Meanwhile our sources give no real sense of Bosporan involvement or even interest in the wars between the Ptolemies and Seleucids, though we may be sure enough that they kept abreast of events.<sup>158</sup>

Since the Argive envoys were on a mission that was in some degree religious, we should consider the relevance of the great festival which Ptolemy II had instituted at Alexandria for the cult of his parents and, by extension, his own family, the Ptolemaia. This was a quadrennial festival, like the Olympics with which it was explicitly equated by Philadelphus.<sup>159</sup> This new festival may have begun in 282 with the funeral of Ptolemy I, though 279/8 is the conventional date for its inauguration, when we know that Greek communities outside Egypt were invited to send sacred envoys.<sup>160</sup> Fortunately, this uncertainty is not of prime importance, for in either case the Ptolemaia should have been celebrated in the years 255/4. Given that (admittedly rather broad) date and the designedly outwardly connected nature of that festival, there seems every likelihood that the Argives had come with a view to attending the Ptolemaia.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Polybius 4. 38 and the Rhodian-Byzantine war of 220 BC.

<sup>156</sup> Valuably explored by Avram (2003).

<sup>157</sup> On which, see Fraser (1972) I. 172 and nn.: these are very limited and are now reduced further by our realization that 'Hadra jars' in the Black Sea came from Crete, not Egypt: above, n. 117. Of the other goods mentioned by Fraser from the Black Sea, none clearly came from the Bosporan kingdom and some – e.g. nuts – almost certainly did not. It is also most unlikely that the Mares of UPZ 149 (third century BC) have any link with the obscure Mares mentioned by Hecataeus (Steph. Byz. s.v.) and Herodotus (3. 94; 7. 79), but not by any subsequent writer on the region. Wilcken's difficulties in reading the next word might mean that we should consider youths who are somehow *Marsi*... At any rate, if such an obscure group had come all the way from the south-eastern Black Sea to Egypt, its members are unlikely to have been called 'coastal' instead of e.g. 'Pontic'. Among locations nearer to hand, we might consider the Dead Sea, hard by which lay a mountain called Mares (John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale* 158): that would at least suit the adjective. There is no reason to think that the Mares of Hecataeus and Herodotus lived at the coast.

<sup>158</sup> Accordingly, there is scant reason to find a naval battle between Ptolemaic and Seleucid fleets on the Nymphaeum fresco, as Höckmann (1999) seems to suppose.

<sup>159</sup> Fraser (1972) I. 231.

<sup>160</sup> Further, Habicht (1992) 10. An inscription shows what happened when Philadelphus' men broached the matter with the League of the Islanders: Fraser (1972) I. 231 with Thompson (2000).

At the same time, Philadelphus was very committed (not least at the Ptolemaia, one presumes) also to the development of the cult of Arsinoe II, his sister and wife.<sup>161</sup> She became closely associated with Isis, which may well be important to our understanding of the Argive mission.<sup>162</sup> For we have seen the massive importance of Io in Argos, especially by virtue of her descendants (Danaus and his daughters) and their return from Egypt to irrigate the plain of Argos. Insofar as Arsinoe became Isis, she might also be seen as Io: we have noted their association, as also other goddesses with whom Arsinoe II was linked (especially Aphrodite, Demeter and Hera). Interestingly, a plausible case has been made that Roman-period heads of a queenly female with small horns at her brow are copies of third-century BC images of Arsinoe II as Io.<sup>163</sup> In that context it is intriguing also to find in Theocritus' poem about the Ptolemaic Adonia, the presence of a singer who is identified simply as 'the Argive woman's daughter' (Theocr. 15. 97). The combination in that poem of Arsinoe II, an Argive woman and the notion of a daughter might even amount to a learned allusion to an association between Io and Arsinoe, though the precise nature of any such linkage here remains obscure. Certainly, Ptolemaic poets and the like had something to say about Io. Callimachus names her 'Inachian Isis'.<sup>164</sup> The enigmatic Lycophron has still more to say, for he not only has Io as Isis, but locates Io in the context of marriage, and possibly alludes at the same time also to her Crimean adventure.<sup>165</sup> Meanwhile, it would be particularly good to know more about Aristaeus of Argos, who is thought to have been at the court of Philadelphus when he wrote about Egyptian Serapis as the ruler of Argos.<sup>166</sup> At any rate, the notion of Inachian Isis persisted into the Principate. We happen to know that some visitors to Isis' temple far up the Nile at Philae then left an inscription which shows that their poetic thoughts turned to Io, precisely as 'Inachian Isis'.<sup>167</sup>

After all, Arsinoe will have claimed descent from Heracles who was not only an Argive,<sup>168</sup> but also a descendant of Io, as we have seen. In that

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Ager (2005): the first full brother–sister marriage of the Ptolemies; she had died in 270 or perhaps a little later; on redating her death to 268 see Habicht (1992) 72; Carney (2000) 33 n. 62.

<sup>162</sup> Gölbl (2001) 101–4.

<sup>163</sup> Freyer-Schauenburg (1983) esp. 48–9. Cf. horned Io at Pompeii: Tran Tam Tinh (1964).

<sup>164</sup> *Anth. Pal.* 6. 50 = 18 Gow; cf. Callim. fr. 472.

<sup>165</sup> Esp. *Alex.* 1204, *tauroparthenos*: a Bosporan allusion gives further point to the peculiar formulation. West (1984a) rightly observes the antipathy to marriage of his speaker, Cassandra.

<sup>166</sup> Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1. 21. 106, who links this to the tradition of an Apis ruling there. For the claim that he was in Alexandria, see Stambaugh (1967), though the commonplace nature of the name does not assist.

<sup>167</sup> I. Philae 158. Contrast the local view: Zabkar (1988).

<sup>168</sup> Reed (2000) 321 observes the relevance of Theocr. 17. 20–7.



sense Arsinoe herself was an Argive woman's daughter, indeed the female descendant of Io. All this underpinned the identification of Io and Arsinoe and so facilitated also the queen's identification with Isis. Meanwhile, we should observe too Arsinoe II's concern with Hera, who again points us to Argos and the story of Io.<sup>169</sup> The sacred envoys may have come from Argos for the Ptolemaia, but, in view of all this, we may well suspect that they had a special interest in the developing cult of Arsinoe II. And more generally, of course, there was every reason for Argos to engage in kinship diplomacy with Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II, these offspring of Argive Heracles, while the developing divinity of the living Philadelphus might have been enough to raise the idea in Argos that any mission to the Ptolemies was sacred. Of course, none of that alters or detracts from the fact that we see signs of Aphrodite too in Arsinoe's cult: Isis embraced both Aphrodite and Io, but it was the latter who mattered more to Argives.<sup>170</sup>

The Bosporan envoys were different insofar as they were simply envoys, not sacred envoys like the Argives. We should observe that the Spartocids were not of Macedonian origin: they seem to have been Thracian, or at least that is the usual modern inference from their sustained taste for Thracian personal names across the centuries of their dynasty.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, although Argive Io had played an important role in naming the straits that defined and stood at the centre of their fractured realm, she was not their ancestress, or at least not in any way that we may readily trace, despite the enormous number and range of her offspring. Further, we may well understand that a king of Paerisades' considerable stature may have viewed Philadelphus' development of cult around his family with limited enthusiasm and perhaps a measure of cynicism, for there was nothing of the sort among the Spartocids themselves. All that was enough to mean that he might send envoys to Alexandria and to Ptolemy's festivities, very possibly with a view to Io-Isis, but these would not necessarily be sacred envoys. However, both sets of envoys – separately and together in their shared interest – will have been pleased to visit the Fayum, not only for its usual attractions, but also for the reason that this was now the Arsinoite nome, the particular nome of Arsinoe-Isis-Io.

It is very hard to gain any clear sense of Philadelphus' interest in the Bosporan kingdom. However, his activities at Byzantium on the Thracian Bosphorus show him busy at the gateway in and out of the region, while

<sup>169</sup> Fraser (1972) I. 137–8.

<sup>170</sup> See Fraser (1972) I. 229–30 on Aphrodite and Arsinoe.

<sup>171</sup> Braund (2015a).

we have seen his interests inside the Black Sea too, not least at Heraclea Pontica. While one could wish for more hard detail, it is clear enough that Philadelphus had concerns and ambitions with regard to the Black Sea which can only have been of major concern also to Paerisades.<sup>172</sup> As far as we know, there was no question of kinship between the Bosporans and Ptolemaic Egypt, but there is every likelihood that attempts were made to find such a connection, whether in the Bosphorus or in the library at Alexandria. The family tree of Io was so enormous that ingenuity might succeed in such a quest, while we have observed the ways in which Egyptian interest in bovines might be made to intersect with the Crimean Bosphorus and the land of the Tauroi.<sup>173</sup> Ultimately, we cannot know why the Argives and Bosporans had sent the delegations that appear in our papyrus of 254 BC, but the foregoing considerations seem to suggest an admixture of myth, religion and power-politics that was common enough in the Hellenistic world.

### Conclusion

Current evidence suggests that Isis never attained in the Bosporan kingdom the significance that she enjoyed in much of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean. However, we see her in the Crimea from the earlier third century well into the Roman period. Moreover, there is a distinct possibility that her significance in the Bosphorus is concealed to some degree not only by the chance of survival and loss, but also by her ability to appear in a range of guises, such as Demeter, Aphrodite, Io and Artemis, amongst others.<sup>174</sup> This is a large issue in the study of Isis everywhere in antiquity. Apuleius, for example, is very clear about her many faces in book II of his *Metamorphoses*, where he also sets out the sheer extent of her claims to power over sea, land and sky, much as we find in her so-called aretalogies. She is a deity of exceptional range and potency, reaching far beyond her instantiation in Egypt to become important across the Greek world. It is not hard to imagine how and why a deity of her enormous reach might attract.

At the same time, however, we have also seen how she may be located in the political and diplomatic context of Bosporan relations with the

<sup>172</sup> The general point is well made in Buraselis, Stefanou and Thompson (2013) 3.

<sup>173</sup> See p. 182 on Lycophron, and p. 153 on the tradition that Osiris had given its name to Taurike.

<sup>174</sup> On Isis and Tyche, see Pollini (2003), who reasonably takes this tendency to be part of a larger move towards henotheism, on which see Turcan (2007).

Ptolemies, as well as in the broader religious currents of the Hellenistic period. The extensive connections of Io, in particular, offered an invaluable link for the Crimean Bosphorus with the extended network of kin (Greek and non-Greek) that claimed a relationship with her. We may well wonder, for example, what Crimean Bosphorans and Byzantines said to each other about their common experience of Io.<sup>175</sup> And we have observed the likelihood that the much-discussed Bosphoran embassy to Ptolemy Philadelphus, in the Fayum in 254 BC, was concerned with Io, at least as a significant part of its mission, since Ptolemy dispatched it up the Nile with an Argive 'sacred' embassy that must surely have had that concern. While, a century or so later in 112 BC, a Roman senator took the voyage up the Nile and visited the Fayum crocodiles by means of royal Ptolemaic organisation, and while this seems to have become a tourist trail, the fact that Argives and Bosphorans travelled together in 254 BC lends force to the possibility that there was more than casual touristic intent to their particular expedition.<sup>176</sup>

We have seen Io's importance both to Argos and to Philadelphus, whose sister-wife Arsinoe II seems to have been treated not only as Isis but also as Io. However, we have also seen that, in one very important respect, the Bosphoran concern with Io was very different from that of the Argives and Ptolemies. Whereas the relationship with Io was a matter of kinship for them, her contribution to Bosphoran identity was largely a matter of toponymy. Nowhere is there any indication that the Spartocids claimed descent from her, which helps to explain her notable absence from Bosphoran material culture and epigraphy. As for the Bosphoran kings who followed Mithridates Eupator, there was a strong claim to descent from Heracles, whose family-tree certainly included Io as an ancestress. Again, however, we see little or no sign of her in the Bosphorus.<sup>177</sup> The passing of the Ptolemies had not undermined the cult of Isis around the Greek world, but it will have done nothing to encourage Bosphorans to explore mythical links with an Egypt which was firmly under Roman control and no longer reached in their direction.

<sup>175</sup> Further, Apollod. 2. 7; cf. p. 151 on Aeschylus' *Supplices*; the link between Io and the Crimean Bosphorus was still familiar in the second century AD: Appian *Mithr.* 101. See also Papazarkadas and Thonemann (2008) 82 n. 23 on the use of Aeschylus in diplomacy and engagement in kinship diplomacy (involving Argos).

<sup>176</sup> The senator was L. Memmius (P'Tebt. 133, which partially echoes our London papyrus). Tourist trail: Strabo 17. 1. 38, written a century or more after Memmius' visit.

<sup>177</sup> Shaub (2007) 307 collects scant possibilities there.

Moreover, we have observed in the context of Parthenos that there was another tale of animal crossing at the Crimean Bosphorus, which centred on a hunted stag, not a gadfly-driven bovine. The neglect of Io in the Bosporan kingdom tends to strengthen the view that the story of the stag was important locally, not least at the narrowest point of the Crimean Bosphorus, where the stag-hunting Parthenos had a cult. Here as elsewhere key local myths that were important in the north Black Sea differed sharply from the myths supported elsewhere around the Greek world. At the same time, however, the rulers of the Bosphorus might find it convenient to exploit the full range of their kingdom's connections in the course of their diplomacy. At the same time, there were notions enough of a distant past in which Egyptians had controlled Scythia and become the ancestors of the Colchians. The visitor to Egypt was likely to be reminded of that ancient greatness.<sup>178</sup> There was much to discuss in Egypt, and much to carry back and report to Paerisades.

Quite how the cult of Isis in the Black Sea figured in these discussions is of course obscure to us. Certainly, it constituted another link between Egypt and the Bosphorus, but we have seen that the diffusion of Isis' cult was a phenomenon of religion as well as any Ptolemaic policy.<sup>179</sup> The depiction of the trireme 'Isis' at Nymphaeum seems to illustrate that aspect of Bosporan religious linkage to Egypt, even though the meaning of the image will continue to be disputed. If we are right to suspect that it depicts the celebration of the Ploiaphesia there, as at Byzantium, the cult of Isis had attained much more significance in the third-century Bosphorus than is otherwise obvious, apparently in association with Aphrodite and embracing a prominent building, roofed with tiles produced in the Bosporan royal potteries.

<sup>178</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2. 61; Hdt. 2. 104–5.

<sup>179</sup> Simms (1989) explores the construction of a temple of Isis at Athens, evidently by Egyptians, with Athenian approval, at an uncertain date well before the Ptolemies. Further, Wijma (2014).

*The ‘Mistress of Apatouron’: Aphrodite Ourania  
and the Bosporan Apatouria*

Aphrodite Ourania is at once familiar and elusive. We know a considerable amount about her cult at particular places around the Greek world, ranging from cities of the Greek heartlands (at Athens, Corinth and so on) to the Greek periphery, for example in the eastern Mediterranean, whence her cult was said to have been brought among Greeks.<sup>1</sup> As usual with Greek deities and cults, however, our knowledge of Ourania is patchy across time and space, and leaves abiding uncertainties about the balance of universal and local from case to case. In Bosporan epigraphy the goddess figures with a prominence that is unusual in the Greek world, so that we shall consider a clutch of inscriptions which demand attention on any account. We shall see that they do not represent simply the happenstance of survival (albeit a factor, as always), but rather illustrate the key significance of the goddess for the Bosporans, not least for the rulers of the kingdom. Meanwhile, there is also important literary evidence of different kinds which gives a broad sense of the goddess locally and as shared across the Greek world.<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, however, a single short passage of Strabo has an enormous amount to tell us:

And there is also at Phanagoria a notable *hieron* of Aphrodite Apatouros. They give this etymology of the epithet of the goddess, having put forward a myth – that when the Giants were attacking the goddess there, she called upon Heracles to hide in a certain hollow and then, as she received each of the Giants, one at a time, she gave him to Heracles to murder by deceit (*ex apatēs*). (Strabo II. 2. 10)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Buckler (1936) offers a list that remains useful.

<sup>2</sup> Well discussed in many publications by Pirenne-Delforge (1994); (2005); (2007) etc. Cf. the summary sketch of Rosenzweig (2004) 59–81.

<sup>3</sup> ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ Φαναγορείᾳ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἱερὸν ἐπίσημον τῆς Ἀπατούρου· ἐτυμολογοῦσι δὲ τὸ ἐπίθετον τῆς θεοῦ μῦθόν τινα προσησάμενοι, ὡς ἐπιθεμένων ἐνταῦθα τῇ θεῶ τῶν γιγάντων ἐπικαλεσαμένην τὸν Ἡρακλέα κρύψειεν ἐν κευθμῶνι τινι, εἴτα τῶν γιγάντων ἕκαστον δεχομένην καθ’ ἕνα τῶ Ἡρακλεῖ παραδίδοιη δολοφονεῖν ἐξ ἀπάτης.

We shall return repeatedly to this aetiological etymology, centred on the deceit of Aphrodite Ourania (as was this goddess)<sup>4</sup> and her accomplice, Heracles. En route we shall dispense with a range of minor shibboleths in the scholarly tradition, which can cloud the larger issues. We shall see, for example, that the toponym is indeed Apatouron and not Apatouros, for which the authority is poor and overwhelmed by Strabo and the ancient grammarians who quote him and Hecataeus without query. Also that the evidence attests only a single Apatouron, not two, while that location was fundamentally a sanctuary (in proximity to Phanagoria), even if a small settlement may conceivably have grown up around it – though that too is unattested.<sup>5</sup>

### Approaching Aphrodite Ourania

Artemidorus of Ephesus offers a valuable (if incomplete) vision of Ourania in the work that he composed in the second century AD on the interpretation of dreams. He is concerned to sketch the purport of her and other deities’ appearance in a dream:<sup>6</sup>

Aphrodite Ourania is especially good with regard to marriages and associations and the production of children. For she is the cause of pairings and descendants. She is good also for farmers. For she is considered to be Nature and mother of all things. She is good also for seers. For she is considered the inventor of all prophecy and foretelling. (*On Dreams* 2. 37)

Here, in the Greek world of the Roman empire, Artemidorus associates Ourania with a set of ideas about fertility, and ordered reproduction within marriage. Plutarch, another opinionated figure of that Greek imperial world, displays a similar set of ideas with regard to the goddess, marriage and reproduction.<sup>7</sup> And these Greek ideas had not changed perceptibly over many centuries before. A fragment of Euripides’ *Phaethon*,

<sup>4</sup> The cult-title Ourania is confirmed by epigraphy (below), while its absence in Strabo reflects a wider tendency in texts not to specify Ourania by name: see Cyrino (2010) 28–9 on the various debates that this tendency has sparked.

<sup>5</sup> Even the fullest recent discussions persist in these tendencies: e.g. Ustinova (1999); Kuznetsov (2014). The form *Apatouros* occurs as a toponym only in the (in any case idiosyncratic) text of Pliny the elder (*NH* 6. 18), who gives *Apatouros* (*sic*); he also seems to name Hermonassa as *Hermonasa* and *Cepi* as *Cepoe*, with a mysterious *Sinatoclia* to boot. Only if we press his Latin very hard can we claim that he terms the sanctuary an *oppidum*. Self-evidently, this shaky passage is no reason to abandon the rest of the ancient tradition.

<sup>6</sup> Further, Harris-McCoy (2012); cf. Harrison (2013).

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Plut. *Mor.* 142d; 156c; 370c; 381e with (on links to the tortoise) Arthur (1980), Pirenne-Delforge (1994) 15–25, 233–7, and Pironti (2007); cf. Settis (1966) esp. 50; Llewellyn-Jones (2003) esp. 189 (largely on veiling); Froning (2005). On all aspects of ancient tortoises: Dumoulin (1994).

for example, makes clear the link between Ourania, marriage and child-production, which is all related particularly to a king in a manner that has a particular relevance to the rulers of the Bosphorus, as we shall see.<sup>8</sup> Of course, Artemidorus' vision of the goddess is not complete. He might have gone on to expand upon her role as Nature and in Nature, where she had a specific strength with regard to the sea, and so also a particular significance for those who sailed on the sea, whether for trade, battle or some other purpose.<sup>9</sup> In fact he almost does that, by expatiating on the role of Aphrodite with the epithet Pelagia. Here, as often, divine epithets indicate distinctions between facets of a single deity which are important, but are neither rigid nor exclusive.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Artemidorus had already counterpointed Ourania with Aphrodite Pandemos, whose sphere is here firmly (and misleadingly) extra-marital, as had been stated famously by Plato in his canonical *Symposium*.<sup>11</sup> In broad terms, therefore, we can immediately begin to understand Ourania as a form of Aphrodite that tends to formal and even institutional order and legitimacy as a context for her particular version of love, fertility and reproduction. In mythical terms, she is said to have received her epithet Ourania ('of the heavens', a feature sometimes stressed in star-decked iconography)<sup>12</sup> from her daughter Harmonia, 'Harmony' herself in private and public affairs. In practice, we may well understand why magistrates around the Greek world are found making dedications to her.<sup>13</sup> She is a goddess of the establishment and its settled values.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, Theocritus' literary version of a married woman's dedication to Aphrodite Ourania illustrates how that broad sense of happiness through stability and reproduction in marriage extends also across private life and personal biographies. As with many of the Bosphoran examples we shall consider, this is the dedication of a statue

<sup>8</sup> *Phaeth.* 227–44 with Rosenzweig (2004) 68, reasonably insisting that this is Ourania, though Euripides does not quite say so.

<sup>9</sup> On Aphrodite and the sea, see Pironti (2014) and below.

<sup>10</sup> Papadopoulou (2010); Parker (2011) 90.

<sup>11</sup> As Edwards (1984) esp. 69 rightly insists, the 'Socratic' model, notably of Plato's *Symposium* 180d–182a (cf. Xen. *Symp.* 8, with Socrates himself speaking, and more reservedly than Pausanias, Plato's speaker) demands scepticism, and perhaps a sense of humour too, as befits a sympotic context. Further, Pirenne-Delforge (1988); (2007) 316–17; cf. Parker (2002); Rosenzweig (2004) esp. 77–8; Wallensten (2009) 171–2. On the various large problems entailed, see Parker (2011) esp. 90.

<sup>12</sup> Whether Asterousia in Sindike had any link with her remains unclear: Steph. Byz. *s.v.*

<sup>13</sup> For their dedications, see Wallensten (2009) 175–8. Paus. 9. 16. 3 reports her naming by Harmonia specifically in a Theban context, but he shows no surprise at what made good sense across the Greek world.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the role of Aphrodite in the (Hellenistic) 'pride of Halicarnassus': Pirenne-Delforge (2011) with full bibliography. As for the vexed question of 'sacred prostitution' cf. Budin (2008) and Aphrodite; we need note here only that there is no sign at all of that in the Bosphoran kingdom.

of the goddess: the ideas accompanying this statue may prepare us for the Bosphorus, where we have nothing quite as explicit. Here we have Ourania, very much as the antithesis to Pandemos. Ourania has been the base – the initiating principle – from which this marriage has set out and continued to improve under her guidance and tutelage. The dedication expresses the benefits of such piety and especially of piety towards Ourania, which explicitly include children:

The Cyprian – not Pandemos. Propitiate the goddess after saying  
Ourania. Chaste Chrysgone's offering  
in the house of Amphicles, where children and life she had,  
together. Always was it better for them each year,  
Starting from you, O Mistress. For humans who care for  
immortals have more themselves.<sup>15</sup>

These are recurring ideas around Aphrodite Ourania in particular, though she may not always be specified by her heavenly epithet. Almost a millennium before Artemidorus, at the very beginnings of Greek literature, Hesiod's *Theogony* offered a narrative of Aphrodite's genesis which had already encapsulated much of this and made her, as the daughter of Ouranos the Sky, inescapably celestial Ourania. However, among the earlier texts on the goddess, it is a fragment of Aeschylus that shows most clearly the entwining of her celestial and sexual identities with Nature, fertility and a kind of marriage. Aphrodite herself speaks:

The sacred Sky feels a desire to penetrate the Earth, and the Earth is possessed by the desire to enjoy marriage. A shower comes to fertilise the Earth, falling from her husband Sky. And this is how she brings forth for mortals the pasture of flocks, the sustenance of Demeter and the ripe fruit of the trees. All that exists is created from moist marriage. And it is I who am the cause of all that.<sup>16</sup>

While ordered marriage is not a concern in this image of primordial desire and the workings of Nature, the vast scope and powers of Aphrodite are clear enough, as too are her links to the paternal sky. Of course, that matters as much with Aphrodite Ourania as with any instantiation of Aphrodite, so that we remain unclear which form of Aphrodite delivered these lines.

Mythical Athens provides a clear case of Ourania's importance in legitimate childbirth, entailing Theseus himself, son of Aegeus. Indeed, as

<sup>15</sup> *Anth. Pal.* 6. 340 = Theocritus 2, Gow-Page.

<sup>16</sup> Aesch. fr. 44 (cf. Eur. fr. 898 N), with Pirenne-Delforge (2007) 314 for translation and discussion.



an aetiological cult-myth this is part of cult practice too. For Pausanias relates a myth of the foundation of Aphrodite Ourania's cult at Athens, in which the production of children within marriage was the key issue (Paus. 1. 14. 7). According to this Athenian tradition, King Aegeus was childless and took that to indicate that Aphrodite Ourania had placed a curse on him. In response the king founded her cult in Athens. At the same time, Pausanias also explains that the deity came from the east, with her origins among the Assyrians.<sup>17</sup> He specifies her cult at Ascalon,<sup>18</sup> where again in Herodotus we see her importance in the production of children. And here we reach the northern Black Sea. For Herodotus relates how Ourania punished descendants of the Scythians who had despoiled her temple at Ascalon by giving them the 'female disease', that is damaging their virility with a consequential tendency to childlessness.<sup>19</sup> Since Herodotus puts this historical explanation in the mouths of Scythians, we are left to consider the local cultural interactions on the north coast of the Black Sea that may have given rise to such notions about Ourania. All the more so, since interaction between Greeks and non-Greeks characterised the narrative of the arrival of her cult among Greeks and possibly also the imagined operation of that cult, perhaps as that of Artemis Ephesia.<sup>20</sup> In the complex cultural mix of the Bosphoran kingdom there was a particular place – indeed, a need – for cults and deities which were taken to embrace multiculturalism and to forge with it a profoundly Greek reality, as did cults of Ourania and Ephesia around the Greek world more generally. Pausanias' passage shows these processes in Athens, in particular, but they may be suspected too on the north coast of the Black Sea. Certainly, Heracles seems to have played such a role in the vital (albeit obscure) interactions of the Sindians and settlers from Teos at Phanagoria on the Taman peninsula, together with Dionysus and very likely Aphrodite Ourania too.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, with regard to Ourania in the eastern Mediterranean and the goddess Astarte, we seem to have a dynamic process of mutual

<sup>17</sup> See Gaifman (2012) 98 on the migration of cults. On the place of Aphrodite in the wider debate about correspondences between Greek and eastern myth and cult, Breitenberger (2007), esp. 8–21, offers a balanced survey.

<sup>18</sup> Herodotus locates Ascalon in Syria, so that the Syrian Aphrodite in archaic Olbia is surely Ourania and not an extraordinarily early example of Atargatis among Greeks: further, Alexandrescu Vianu (1997).

<sup>19</sup> An explanation given by the Scythians themselves, according to Hdt. 1. 105, 4; cf. 4. 67.

<sup>20</sup> See above, p. 129.

<sup>21</sup> On these complex matters see Kuznetsov (2016) and Braund (2017b). The key evidence is numismatic: note esp. Frolova (2002).



Figure 11 Heracles on Sindian coinage of the later fifth century BC. © Classical Numismatic Group Inc. [www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com)

influences.<sup>22</sup> It is especially interesting to see that the settlers at Berezan and Olbia were already in archaic times concerned with a goddess whom they called ‘Syrian Aphrodite’. This is far too early for the cult of Atargatis, which began in the Greek mainland in the third century BC, so she can hardly be the Syrian Goddess of Lucian, for example.<sup>23</sup> It is much more probable that we have here the Astarte whom Herodotus presents as Aphrodite Ourania. Certainly, these dedications attest a commitment in archaic Olbia and its environs to an Aphrodite with a Syrian identity. The implications are considerable. First, we therefore have a very plausible context for Scythian claims about the impact of the goddess at Ascalon upon Scythian society. In all likelihood it was in or around Olbia that Herodotus garnered the notion and probably generalised from it, as he did with so much of the other information he gained at Olbia about the northern Black Sea and its cults. For clearly in archaic Olbia and thereabouts there was a shared concern among Greeks too with this cult of Astarte transformed locally into Syrian Aphrodite. We may well suspect that Herodotus’ Scythian informants had developed their ideas in contact with Greeks of the area. Second, and still more important, the very focus on Syrian Aphrodite warns

<sup>22</sup> Bonnet and Pirenne-Delforge (1999); Budin (2004); Pirenne-Delforge (2007) esp. 323; cf. Parker (2011) 69. Lightfoot (2003) offers a wealth of detail on this and related issues.

<sup>23</sup> See esp. Dubois (1996) 122–3, with acute commentary. Lightfoot (2003) 537 seeks to redate the graffiti as a solution, but that is impossible.

us, once more, against any simple model of cult transferral from the mother city, Miletus. For the dedications show that – at least in some cases – the inhabitants of archaic Olbia and its environs took their Aphrodite to be a goddess from Syria. Questions abound, of course. We simply do not know how widespread such an outlook may have been across local society there, or across some particular sections of it. And part of the reason for that is our ignorance too about how often we should understand a dedication simply to Aphrodite as concerning Syrian Aphrodite in any sense. Finally, over this whole issue hangs the still larger question: how and why did this concern with Syrian Aphrodite come about in the northwest Black Sea? We can only observe, perhaps on the path to answering that question, that in the Bosporan kingdom there is no sign of this Syrian deity. Instead, as it seems, we have Aphrodite Ourania, the goddess of Apatouron.

More broadly, we can in any case see Aphrodite as a key force in the development of colonial settlements around the Greek world, whether or not in association with comparable local deities. In colonial processes her power as a marine deity was surely of the first importance: she was able to calm the waters to facilitate movement and exchange.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, her oversight and direction of sexuality, marriage and human and agrarian fecundity were especially desirable in the developing colonial environment. Especially so, where the usual tendency of arriving Greek men to marry local women was key to colonial success. While marriage and reproduction were always central issues, colonial processes added further complexities and tensions. So much is clear enough in broad terms, but the particularities are much harder to trace, even where evidence is substantial.<sup>25</sup> At Naucratis, for example, the epigraphic record shows us something of Aphrodite Pandemos and indicates the importance of her role both as a deity of the waters and as a goddess concerned with sexuality. Meanwhile, the literary record not only tends to confirm and deepen our understanding of Pandemos there, but also brings Aphrodite Ourania within the same framework and so warns us of our ignorance of detail.<sup>26</sup> What eludes us is the operation in particular colonial relationships of these forms of Aphrodite (separately or together).

Meanwhile, in the distant and different environment of the Bosporan kingdom, there is no sign at all of Pandemos, at least under that epithet.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Graf (1985) 261.

<sup>25</sup> As for Aphrodite of Eryx on Sicily: Lietz (2012); cf. the papers gathered in Acquaro et al. (2010).

<sup>26</sup> See Gutzwiller (2010) with key bibliography.

<sup>27</sup> She has been claimed in various terracottas and other small artefacts of the region (where Epitragia is sometimes evident), but is nowhere attested epigraphically or in any relevant literary text: further, Treister (2015).

We do find, however, an Aphrodite who seems distinct from Ourania of Apatouron. Indeed, without that wider or alternative sense of Aphrodite, the careful designation of Apatouran Ourania on dedications to her (below) would have been unnecessary. In inscriptions an Aphrodite without any epithet recurs in Bosporan contexts, as commonly elsewhere of course. Similarly we also have a range of images on everything from stone to jewellery which suggest Aphrodite and have been claimed at some time to have a bearing on Aphrodite Ourania, but probably do not. Fortunately, an acute recent survey of these means that we do not need to review each of these objects and the various claims made for them, while it also confirms the need for judicious scepticism.<sup>28</sup> In general, it is salutary to bear in mind too that even in the single city of Athens, for example, there were various Aphrodites.<sup>29</sup> In the Bosphorus, Ourania had a special importance, but she was by no means the whole of Aphrodite there.

There was also, for example, the Aphrodite at Bosporan Cepi, where an east-facing late Hellenistic temple was found, some thirty square metres in area, and painted in red and grey. Many of the tiles with which it was roofed came from Panticapaeum across the straits – one with the stamp of the royal factory – while the rest were of more local production, possibly repairs. Clearly the roof was striking in appearance, incorporating marble details: a marble acroterium survives. Best known among the archaeological remains is a small Hellenistic statue of a female, standing semi-nude and leaning forward on her left elbow and forearm. She is sometimes called the 'Taman Aphrodite', with her closest parallel on Rhodes.<sup>30</sup> But she may not be the goddess at all, for (as Sokol'skiy the excavator noted) she could very well be a nymph.<sup>31</sup> It was the importance of Aphrodite in the Tamana area that caused her to be seen as Aphrodite, but that argument is wholly unsafe, because the important Aphrodite here was Ourania of Apatouron, who had a very different iconography, as we shall see. If there is any substance to Sokol'skiy's suspicion that she may have been dedicated by a visiting Rhodian, then heterodox iconography might be

<sup>28</sup> Treister (2015).

<sup>29</sup> Machaira (2008).

<sup>30</sup> Sokol'skiy (1964); LIMC *s.v.* Aphrodite no. 646; Ridgway (1990) 102 n. 15; cf. 81–2 on the type, paralleled elsewhere (cf. LIMC *s.v.* Aphrodite nos. 644–5). Note also terracottas of the deity; Sokol'skiy (1961). The temple had been pillaged by the Roman period, though the cult may well have continued at Cepi, where it was certainly older than the Hellenistic structure: Sokol'skiy (1973).

<sup>31</sup> LIMC *s.v.* Aphrodite, no. 646. Sokol'skiy (1964) III. On the Rhodian counterpart, probably a nymph, see Machaira (2003) with bibliography. Cf. also Savostina (2012) 179–85 on the female torso found at Phanagoria in 1985 (too bare to be Ourania).

explained. However, the Rhodian statuette is probably a nymph, so that we should probably take her Taman cousin to be a nymph also.<sup>32</sup> More generally, however, we should also be clear about the size of the statue, which is rather small and hardly decisive in itself in settling the deity who had this fine building, most likely a temple. Before the head was lost, it stood some 50–60 cm in height, while the Rhodian statuette was more than half as big again (standing 78.5 cm without its head).<sup>33</sup> In addition, there were evidently other female statuettes in marble, found in the Cegi temple, which survive only as small fragments, including a head that might well be Aphrodite's. Notable too is a seated goddess in terracotta with patera and calathus, who would suit Aphrodite Ourania well enough, albeit other female deities too. Also suggestive of Aphrodite is a mould for making a dancing terracotta Eros, with which must be considered perhaps a winged Nike, as well as a fine terracotta boy and much more besides. On balance there is a strong enough case for taking this building to be a temple of Aphrodite, however we identify the 'Taman Aphrodite' statuette. The more important point is that epigraphy indicates cult of Aphrodite at Cegi in any case by the end of the fifth century BC, well before this temple was built some three centuries later.<sup>34</sup>

With regard to her cults in such cities close to Apatouron, in particular, we are left to wonder how the different cults and forms of Aphrodite may have interrelated, and whether they were the focus more for conflict or for cooperation between these neighbours. For example, what did the cult of Aphrodite that seems to have been part of a larger complex<sup>35</sup> across the straits from Porthmium (at so-called Beregovoy-4) have to do with the goddess of Apatouron to its south? Or indeed, with the rest of the array of cults that thronged and in some sense created the landscape along this central highway of the Bosporan kingdom? It is important that we ask such questions, even if we cannot (yet) answer them. After all, we are far from understanding such matters even among the various cults of Aphrodite which we know in better-attested places, such as Athens.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless,

<sup>32</sup> Sokol'skiy (1964) 114–15, observing the close parallel on Rhodes and the Rhodian presence attested in the region, and not only through pottery.

<sup>33</sup> On the growing body of inscriptions, Kuznetsov (2014) 120 n. 40 with Finogenova and Tokhtas'yev (2003) (Hermonassa). Cf. also Zhuravlev and Lomtadze (2013).

<sup>34</sup> Sokol'skiy (1973). There is no indication that she is Ourania. Cf. too Sokol'skiy (1964) 114–15.

<sup>35</sup> Interpreted as largely that of Demeter and Kore, while recent discoveries there (esp. images on metal, recently discovered) are taken to show Eleusis-like mysteries: Zavoykin (2015). The garlanded Heracles may recall Bol'shaya Bliznitsa, where similar interpretations have been advanced in a burial context: see p. 272. Further, Skrzhinskaya (2000); (2010a); (2010b); Bondarenko (2007; Shaub (2007).

<sup>36</sup> Surveyed by Rosenzweig (2004).

and with Athens in mind, we can at least observe that a city called Gardens (*Kepoi* = Cepi) is exactly right for a cult of Aphrodite in all her natural fertility.<sup>37</sup> There is a clear *prima facie* case for supposing that the Aphrodite at Bosporan Cepi resembled the Athenian Aphrodite 'in the Gardens' (*en Kepois*) by the River Ilissus, where a particularly beautiful statue of the goddess (made by Alcamenes and perhaps Phidias) contrasted sharply with a nearby aniconic image of Ourania.<sup>38</sup> We can only wonder what the Athenian Gylon made of these connections when he was appointed to Cepi by the Spartocid king around the end of the fifth century BC, and whether he may have played some part in the development of the local cult.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, a little further afield in the kingdom we have also Aphrodite Nauarkhis – at Panticapaeum and possibly Nymphaeum in the Crimea and at Gorgippia in the Asiatic Bosporus. Once more we are left to wonder about her interaction with Apatouron and its mistress, Ourania.<sup>40</sup>

In the Bosporan kingdom Aphrodite Ourania's particular locale – Apatouron – was pivotal to wider Bosporan engagement with her, as we shall see. While it is perfectly possible, and even likely, that there were other cult-centres of Ourania around the kingdom, our only clear evidence on her cult there takes us repeatedly to Apatouron and nowhere else. Where precisely this Apatouron stood, however, remains a matter of some controversy. It has not been found archaeologically. However, we know that Apatouron lay on the Asiatic side of the Bosporus, where it was clearly in the vicinity of Hermonassa, Cepi and Phanagoria. It was most closely associated with the last of those cities, as we shall see.<sup>41</sup> Inscribed dedications to Ourania, together with the literary evidence, show that her cult-centre at Apatouron had not only a physical presence that was striking in the landscape, but also a broader conceptual reach that took in the Crimea too. That reach was key to her massive role in cementing the kingdom, while cult ideology also featured a local cult-myth about the defeat of chaos which underpinned its functions. Accordingly, it is entirely understandable why scholars have been moved to make enormous claims for Ourania as the tutelary deity of the kingdom and much more besides.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Delruelle and Pirenne-Delforge (1994).

<sup>38</sup> Paus. 1. 19. 2; Pliny, *NH* 35. 15–16 (sculptors); Lucian, *Imagines* 6, on its beauty.

<sup>39</sup> Aeschin. 3. 171–2; epigraphy shows that the cult was established at Cepi well before Gylon arrived: Sokol'skiy (1973).

<sup>40</sup> There is no evidence of her cult in the Bosporus before the Roman period: CIRB 30 (Panticapaeum, dedication of the later first century BC); 1115 (Gorgippia, temple built in AD 110).

<sup>41</sup> See below and Kuznetsov (2014), who dispels a series of bad arguments, adds some of his own and comes to what must be broadly the right conclusion about its location in the territory of Phanagoria.

We shall see that our evidence for the Bosporan cult of Aphrodite Ourania coheres closely with the sense of her cult elsewhere in that her Bosporan cult too was very much about marriage, legitimate reproduction and the maintenance of the social order in the present and for the future of the realm, at both private and public levels.

In this chapter we shall review this (accruing) Bosporan evidence in detail, to see how much it can and cannot tell us about the goddess in the Bosphorus, her cult and her cult-centre at Apatouron. Having done so, we shall consider also what more may be inferred about this Bosporan phenomenon from comparable cults elsewhere around the Greek world and beyond, in full awareness of the uncertainties involved in setting this Bosporan goddess beside deities known as Aphrodite Ourania elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> In so doing we must face too the (rather unhelpful) question which has long preoccupied so much of the scholarship on the cults of the northern Black Sea, namely whether they are Greek or non-Greek or some admixture of the two (an enticing compromise).<sup>43</sup> From the first, however, we must stress not only the broad value of Aphrodite in a colonial context of whatever kind – in the Bosphorus as at Naucratis and elsewhere – but also the particular sense of place in this Bosporan case. For we have seen with Parthenos, in particular, how a key Crimean deity reached across the straits from Europe to Asia. In what follows, we shall see Aphrodite Ourania reaching in the other direction from Asia to Europe, and so binding together in another way the very landscape of a kingdom centred upon a marine environment to which she was very well suited.

### **Approaching Bosporan Ourania: Origins and Imaginings**

As we begin to explicate the importance of Aphrodite Ourania in the Bosphorus, we must observe Ourania's almost complete absence from Miletus. We may infer that there is no simple tale here of a cult transported northwards by Milesian settlers. Aside from a possible allusion to her in an astronomical feature of the Roman period there, nothing has yet been found in Miletus to suggest the goddess in this most renowned of Black Sea mother-cities, despite some recent claims.<sup>44</sup> Nor is Aphrodite particularly prominent at Miletus in any other guise, as has often been observed.

<sup>42</sup> Kindt (2013) ch. 5 offers a fresh view on the tension between local and universal.

<sup>43</sup> Ustinova (1998) and (1999) conveniently sets out the state of the question in that scholarly tradition, as also Shaub (2007); cf. Pirenne-Delforge (2005).

<sup>44</sup> Milet 1. 7. 201 (the Serapeum), with the single word 'Ourania' (and nothing specific to Aphrodite).



That seems ever more remarkable in the light of recent work at Olbia, famously a Milesian foundation. For we are beginning to understand that the goddess was very important at Olbia, as also in the Milesian colony of Istrus, for example.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, her cult is attested too on archaic Berezan: even if the identification of her sanctuary through terracottas cannot be certain, graffiti from the necropolis seem to show concern with her there.<sup>46</sup> It may well be that we should look to nearby Didyma, where Apollo's oracle was probably involved in much Milesian overseas activity. For there we do find a dedication to Aphrodite Ourania, though it is by no means of archaic date: its letter forms suggest that it was made in the third century BC.<sup>47</sup> While cults were often transferred to colonies from mother-cities, there were other scenarios and other factors at work. The colonial experience and the new colonial world provided their own impetus in the development of cults around the communities of the Black Sea and elsewhere. It is not hard to see the appeal of a goddess of fertility and reproduction to an early settlement, while cities like Olbia were powerfully concerned with the sea and the marine world of Aphrodite too. It had been a great voyage from the Mediterranean into a strange and challenging sea, and that interplay of distance and connectivity by sea remained central to life there, rather as we see with the account of Dio Chrysostom.<sup>48</sup> How far pre-colonial beliefs among non-Greek local cultures contributed to the emergence of particular civic cults remains a vexed question, largely beyond our reach, but we should be clear that cities all over the Greek world had their religious particularities and idiosyncrasies, so that simple transfer of a local cult to the colony or from the mother-city to the colony are not to be expected. The exceptional development of important civic cults of Apollo Iatros (Ietros, in Ionian Greek) in the northern and western Black Sea, may owe something to cross-cultural interactions (for that was the nature of the colonising process in itself), but the concept of a healing Apollo was so embedded in Greek culture from Homer onwards so that the fact that colonising Miletus had no cult of Apollo Iatros (for all the massive importance of Apollo, especially at Didyma) cannot support any strong claim that he was brought into the colonies from local non-Greek cultures.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Alexandrescu Vianu (1997); Krapivina (2010); Bujskikh (2015).

<sup>46</sup> Nazarov (2001) esp. 163 on the graffiti (which are not from the sanctuary).

<sup>47</sup> I.Didyma 123.

<sup>48</sup> Braund (2007a).

<sup>49</sup> See Ustinova (2009a), whose valuable study makes much of non-Greek origins.



Accordingly, the discovery of a significant sanctuary of Aphrodite at Miletus, some twenty-five years ago, was a minor sensation, which has reignited the whole topic of the goddess's role in Greek colonial settlement.<sup>50</sup> The excitement is understandable, but with regard to the Bosphorus the discovery changes little. Unfortunately, inscribed dedications show that the goddess found at Miletus is not Aphrodite Ourania, while her iconography in such dedications has led scholars to see her not as Heavenly Aphrodite (despite her prominent wings), but as a 'mistress of the animals'.<sup>51</sup> While the discovery is of great interest in itself, this is no stride forward in the search for the origins of Bosphoran Ourania. In fact, any link between Miletus and the Bosphoran cult is tenuous at best. For we should be clear from the first that Phanagoria (with which Ourania's Apatouron was most closely connected) claimed Teos as its mother-city, not Miletus. The principal deity at Teos was Dionysus, who had been fostered in his vulnerable infancy by the forebears of Teos' founder, Thessalian Athamas. There is no sign of Ourania at Teos on present evidence, but we should at least observe the possible relevance of such a maternal tradition to her cult.<sup>52</sup> Potentially relevant too is the appearance of Aphrodite prominently in Pindaric poetry on Abdera, another foundation that looked to Teos as its mother-city.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, in the Bosphorus neighbouring Hermonassa seems to have claimed an oikist from Mytilene on Lesbos, where Aphrodite is similarly unremarked. By contrast with Phanagoria and Hermonassa, the city of Cepi ('Gardens') was reckoned to be a Milesian foundation, but we have already begun to see that the Aphrodite there was not Ourania, although her presence in the city is a further example of Aphrodite in Milesian colonies.<sup>54</sup> Complexities abound amid the uncertainty, and we should neither be surprised by that nor seek to reduce the development of local cults to simple narratives of colonial transfer.

We may do better to apply the lesson learnt in our consideration of Artemis Ephesia, which demonstrated well enough that an important religious force might be brought into the Bosphorus (or Massalia or any other colonial city) independently of any particular relationship between the cults of a mother-city and its colonies. For we saw that the

<sup>50</sup> Notably, Greaves (2004) with bibliography.

<sup>51</sup> Greaves (2004) fairly explains the limitations of the discovery; further, SEG 58. 1342; Ehrhardt (2013); and esp. von Graeve (2013, with good illustrations).

<sup>52</sup> Braund (2014a).

<sup>53</sup> The fragmentary *Paeon* 2; cf. Isaac (1986) 107 on this, coin images and other archaeological indications of her importance there. But she need not be Ourania, while the colonial history of Abdera involves much more than Teos: further, Braund (2014a).

<sup>54</sup> Ps. Scymnus, 898; Pliny, *NH* 6. 18.

arrival of Artemis Ephesia here and elsewhere did not require colonists from Ephesus. In that regard, we may recall too the story related by Polycharmus of Naucratis, and relayed by Athenaeus (himself a proud Naucratisite) about how Aphrodite came to their city in archaic times.<sup>55</sup> As the story goes, a small statuette of the goddess had been acquired privately on Cyprus and became the focus of public cult at Naucratis after the ship on which its owner was travelling had been saved from a storm through prayer to the deity. Among Naucratisites this was not a casual anecdote, but evidently (at least by the Roman period) the communal explanation of the cult's origins. Importantly, this Naucratisite tale illustrates the scope for cult origin-stories that have little or nothing to do with cults in mother-cities, while it insists instead upon a broader engagement between Greeks and the supernatural, rather as with the Massaliote tradition on the *aphidruma* brought from Ephesus. While colonies might very well reproduce much from their mother-cities, there was also much that came, and/or was thought to have come, from rather different sources and in rather different ways.<sup>56</sup>

As for Bosporan Ourania we have an important myth of her origin which makes unlikely the existence of any notion among Bosporans that she had simply been imported by settlers from the Aegean or from anywhere else outside the region. Among Bosporans, on the contrary, she was taken to be very much a goddess located at a particular Bosporan place, Apatouron, well before mankind had come to dwell in the region. However, there is a hint that some in the Bosporus acknowledged the familiar Greek idea (why should they not?) that the goddess's origins lay in the Near East, insofar as a royal dedication, found in the general area of Apatouron, seems to have been made to Aphrodite Ourania in the form of Astarte.<sup>57</sup> We should expect educated Bosporans to know about the wider Greek belief in those near eastern origins, while we have seen the 'Scythian' notions about her temple in their history and society, as reported by Herodotus. Crucially, such an awareness of distant origins (whatever credence they may have been allowed locally) could easily be accommodated within local traditions at Apatouron, where local myth insisted that her cult was created at a

<sup>55</sup> Athen. 15.675f–676c; cf. Breitenberger (2007) 25. Polycharmus' date is uncertain.

<sup>56</sup> On institutional reproduction, see particularly Ehrhardt (1983); cf. MacSweeney (2013) on myths of foundation, with the literature she cites.

<sup>57</sup> CIRB 1015 with SEG 45. 1016 (Tokhtas'yev), a dedication to the divine strong Sanerges and Astara. While the identification of Astara with Astarte seems very plausible, there has been more uncertainty about Sanerges, who might be identifiable with Heracles, whom we meet in the myth of Apatouron. Certainly we know of Heracles as Sandon in Asia Minor: Graf (1985) 315.

particular moment in a divine biography which no doubt included much of heaven and earth besides.

Meanwhile, the marine significance of Aphrodite was very appropriate to the Bosphorus, as it was central too in the Greek notions of Ourania's arrival in Greek culture more generally. Not only was the kingdom centred upon the straits that linked the Black Sea and Maeotis, but the Asiatic Bosphorus where her Bosporan cult was centred was dominated by the complex delta of the River Kuban, named the Hypanis in antiquity. Whereas the European Bosphorus of the eastern Crimea was distinctly dry, with few significant waterways except the sea itself, and with no great rivers, the Asiatic Bosphorus was structured around a network of islands, wetlands and marshes. A glance at this geography, therefore, contributes to our understanding of Aphrodite's predominance there. But, by contrast with Naucratis (itself on the delta of a still greater river), there is no indication in the Bosphorus that Ourania was thought to have been brought by Greeks or Phoenicians from across the waters, despite the fact that she was known to exist also on distant shores.

Since Bosporans imagined their deity as already present in the Asiatic Bosphorus not only before its settlement by Greeks, but still earlier and before the emergence of mankind, they evidently saw her cult among them as distinct from anything that had come with colonisation or through previous human agency of any kind, including the wild exploits of Scythians. Moreover, such a Bosporan perception tends to confirm that there was no very obvious way in which the goddess of Apatouron had in fact been brought from Miletus, Teos, Mytilene or anywhere else. Ourania was already in place there, on that view, well before anyone came to settle in the Bosphorus, whether Greek or barbarian: her powerful presence at Apatouron was considered to be older than Greeks, Scythians, Cimmerians and so on. Furthermore, such a notion of her pre-colonial presence seems to suggest that Bosporans claimed that the colonial settlements of the kingdom had been sanctioned by the goddess herself. For such settlements could hardly have prospered in the face of a hostile local deity of her importance. It follows that the goddess allowed or encouraged the colonial endeavour. Such is the commonplace ideology of colonialism, whereby the land and its natural forces (here with Aphrodite Ourania *in primis*) receive, accept and sanction the newcomers. We have seen the similar claim for Parthenos at Crimean Chersonesus and most likely in the European Bosphorus. Accordingly, although no extant ancient authority has observed the fact, if these inferences are correct, we have a kind of dualism here, with Parthenos welcoming Greek settlers in the west and Ourania doing likewise in the

east of the kingdom, so that Greek settlement was supported by this pair of goddesses.

Strabo knew the Bosphorus better than most Greek writers, though there is no evidence that he ever went there. After all, his favourite queen, Pythodoris, had ruled there before becoming the wife of Archelaus I, king of Strabo's native Cappadocia, and then ruler of her own realm in the southeast and east Black Sea, later Pontus Polemoniacus.<sup>58</sup> The geographer's special knowledge helps to explain why he alone recounts the local myth associated with Aphrodite's cult at Apatouron, which stands at the beginning of this chapter. Oddly, the myth has not received much scholarly attention in general works on Greek religion, while accounts of Bosphoran history and archaeology have tended to treat it with unwarranted impatience.<sup>59</sup> One may find a measure of disdain also in Strabo's words, perhaps. For he presents the etymology of Apatourian Aphrodite in terms which are at least distancing: this is not his etymology, and there is no sign that he thinks it plausible. Rather this is a myth which the locals have 'put forward' as an etymology of an epithet which is in need of explanation, for we shall see (as Strabo knew) that parallels for it are elusive, though not altogether absent.

Stephanus of Byzantium (*s.v.* Apatouron) offers such a parallel, albeit after giving Strabo's summary of the myth, whom he quotes accurately. Crucially, the rest of his lexical entry demonstrates a breadth of knowledge much wider than the text of Strabo, so that his formulation is more than simple derivation from the geographer. Indeed he not only allows a range of other relevant forms, but also takes us much earlier, as far as Hecataeus of Miletus, when he adds:

Ἐκαταῖος δὲ κόλπον οἶδε τὸν Ἀπάτουρον ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ. τὸ τοπικὸν Ἀπάτουρος, ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἀπατουρίτης. δύναται καὶ Ἀπατούριος καὶ Ἀπατουρεύς

Hecataeus knows the Apatouros Bay (*kolpos Apatouros*) in Asia; the adjective from the place is Apatouros, but also Apatourites; also possible is Apatourios and Apatoreus.

It would be wonderful to know where Stephanus had gleaned all these possible usages. They do not come from texts which have survived for us. He thereby indicates how much we have lost from the literary tradition on Apatouron. He also makes it clear enough that the epithet which Strabo

<sup>58</sup> In detail, Braund (2005a).

<sup>59</sup> Tokhtas'yev (1986) is the fullest treatment of the myth.

gives to Aphrodite is an adjective of place, comparable to Lindian Artemis and the like. In that way Strabo's formulation may be seen as a shortened version of the regular phrase in epigraphy, 'Aphrodite Ourania, mistress of Apatouron'. Since Stephanus took her epithet in Strabo (and probably elsewhere besides) to mean *Aphrodite of Apatouron*, we can immediately understand why this epithet of Aphrodite does not appear elsewhere around the Greek world. It only made sense when locating the goddess at a place called Apatouron, a toponym which in turn connected with the myth of deceit, *apatē*.<sup>60</sup>

We may observe that Stephanus does not cite Hecataeus for anything connected with the *hieron*, having quoted Strabo. However, that is not to say that Hecataeus was silent about the *hieron*, still less that it did not exist in his day. Stephanus' quotation of Strabo made otiose any mention of the *hieron* in Hecataeus. We cannot know for sure what Hecataeus did or did not say about it, but his name for the bay tends to imply that the *hieron* was already important enough, for it is hard to see how the bay may have acquired this name other than from the sanctuary itself. And we should expect as much, given our earlier suspicion that the Apatouron cult was established early in the colonial process, in line with the Bosphorans' own sense of its very early date. In fact, a sanctuary at Apatouron would not be remarkable even a century earlier still. We also have the inscription (with relief) of de la Motraye (CIRB 1234), which – if it were not problematic (below) – might have helped to confirm that Ourania was established at Apatouron by around 500 BC. Still more uncertain is the possible relevance of a few graffiti from Olbia, which probably have no direct bearing on Aphrodite at Apatouron, but might illustrate Aphrodite's role in the Olbian Apatouria.<sup>61</sup> Finally, we must have in mind too the suggestive (but untestable) hypothesis that the stars on fifth-century BC coins of the Bosphorus were meant to evoke Ourania.<sup>62</sup> All that apart, however, the probability that the bay took its name from the *hieron* suggests that it already by c. 500 BC was an important and impressive sight, very probably situated close to the waters as suited a cult of marine Aphrodite. If so, we would also have an explanation for the failure to find it archaeologically, for it would most likely now be under water.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Of course, we need not rule out the possibility of dedications to the Apatouran goddess further afield than Panticapaeum (see below) and some may well be discovered at a future date: these will concern the cult in the Bosphorus, unless another place called Apatouron is identified.

<sup>61</sup> Below, n. 200, for their more likely bearing on the Olbian Apatouria.

<sup>62</sup> Hind (2008) who suggests her role in the kingdom's unity on this coinage.

<sup>63</sup> On underwater discoveries, see e.g. Bongard-Levin et al. (2006).

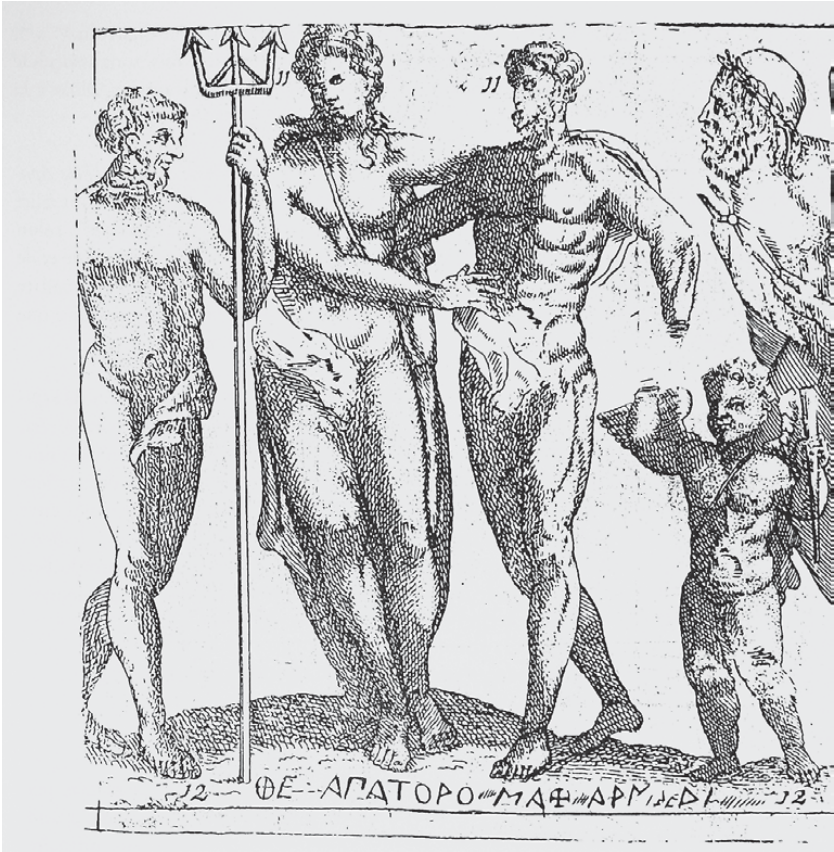


Figure 12 Aphrodite and company: Motraye's drawing

Meanwhile, the shortage of exact parallels (if Stephanus is not exploited) has encouraged some scholars not only to stress that the cult is a local phenomenon, but even to insist upon the importance of non-Greek influence in its creation and in the naming of its great centre, Apatouron.<sup>64</sup> Colonial discourse about the pre-colonial activities of the divine – as in the myth reported by Strabo – can easily be (mis)interpreted as Greek acknowledgment of non-Greek origins, even where (as in this case) the myth is set in a world that pre-dates not only Greeks but also others in the region. The myth certainly illustrates such discourse, as we shall see, but it can hardly

<sup>64</sup> See esp. Ustinova (1999) 42–3, with earlier bibliography.



be taken to attest the existence or influence of a female deity at Apatouron among those who inhabited the region prior to Greek settlement there.

Local peculiarities are to be expected in cults around the Greek world and in their local aetiologies. In this case, for example, we may observe that Heracles and Aphrodite are not frequent companions. However, they are found together elsewhere.<sup>65</sup> After all, the voracious Heracles was famous too for his sexual exploits in different places and contexts. We should observe, for example, his sexual marathon with 50 (or at least 49) virgins at Thespieae in Boeotia, where the strong presence of Aphrodite (and Eros) and a clear concern with marriage and children (Paus. 9. 27. 7) tends to point the way to Ourania, in particular. This was the stuff of local and aetiological cult-myth at Thespieae, rather as at Apatouron. Elsewhere on the northern Black Sea, at Olbia, the myth of Heracles' reproduction with a deceitful snake-woman of nearby Hylaea should be understood as another of these local and aetiological cult-myths, for Heracles had a cult at Hylaea.<sup>66</sup> Heracles, both lover and fighter, was as active in sex as in the despatch of Giants and other creatures of chaos, so that we should not be surprised to find him with Aphrodite in any of her aspects.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, it is crucial to appreciate that 'local' need not at all imply 'non-Greek', either in whole or in part, even if the colonial context facilitates such a claim and colonial discourse may seem to encourage it. For local variety was characteristic of Greek myth and religious practice, as we saw even in our fleeting glimpse of the deities favoured at Miletus and Teos, for example. The view that non-Greek practice lies behind the cult at Apatouron has been encouraged also by the attested concern of Scythians with a goddess who was Aphrodite Ourania in Herodotus' view.<sup>68</sup> But there is no sign of anything non-Greek (let alone Scythian) in what we are told about the cult at Apatouron. However, in order to support that notion of a pre-colonial non-Greek goddess-cult, the name *Apatouron* has been found to be a Scythian etymology, as if it were not a Greek derivation at all,<sup>69</sup> so that (it is claimed) we should see in the allegedly Scythian toponym the important influence of local Scythians. The claim has often been repeated, but it does not convince. We may choose to overlook the problem that such influence from Scythians *stricto sensu* would be a little strange in the Asiatic Bosphorus: should we imagine that the locals shared

<sup>65</sup> Cf. however, Graf (1985) 314–16 (Lydia); LIMC *s.v.* Aphrodite, nos. 1506–16.

<sup>66</sup> Hdt. 4. 8–10; Dubois (1996) 61 (the so-called 'priest's letter').

<sup>67</sup> Paus. 9. 27 with Breitenberger (2007); Pirenne-Delforge (2008).

<sup>68</sup> Hdt. 4. 59; Pirenne-Delforge (2005).

<sup>69</sup> On the history of the notion, see Meyer (2013) 259; see e.g. in Ustinova (1999).

Scythian attitudes and even language? The more fundamental problem is that the whole edifice of Scythian linguistics is an article of faith, resting on the weak foundations of modern inferences from Ossetian, a language of the northern Caucasus well to the east. In fact, given that shaky foundation (and the rather banal etymologies erected upon it), one struggles to understand why these extraordinary claims have been taken so seriously among scholars, unless perhaps normal scholarly caution has been overcome by the noble desire to gain access to a language about which we know very little and, as it seems, by an excessive respect for the capacity of linguistic 'reconstruction'. There was also an appeal for some in the fact that such arguments reduce the impact of Greek foreigners and increase that of a people who might be claimed as ancestral. Predictably, in any event, attempts to find the name amid vague notions of ancient Scythian vocabulary are unpersuasive and best set aside.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, Strabo makes it clear that in the view of the inhabitants of the region the name derives from Greek: even if one goes so far as to swallow the claims for Scythian etymology (as many do), it must be acknowledged that the Greek etymology was promulgated in the Bosphorus, while Strabo says nothing of any countervailing Scythian-based interpretation. In short, whatever the origins may have been, the cult was Greek for Bosphorans.

The main point of the myth reported by Strabo is to offer and account for an obvious Greek etymology in terms of *apatē*, deceit. Even if we choose to imagine – for whatever reason – that the name Apatouron and its cognates derived in reality from the Scythian (or e.g. Sindian) language, we would be required, nevertheless, to see that the Bosphorans took them to be Greek. The point here is not the correctness of any particular etymology, but ancient commitment to a specific etymological explanation. Therefore, the notion of *apatē*, deceit or deception, must be fundamental to our enquiry into the functioning of the cult there and of the myth relayed by Strabo. Later, we shall see that *apatē* was indeed associated with Aphrodite and is key to Ourania's cult at Apatouron. Meanwhile, the principal Scythian link with Ourania (cf. also Hdt. 4. 59) is the Scythians' punishment by the goddess over Ascalon, so that the cult at Apatouron might also be a focus of some alienation. Certainly, Greeks regularly took Scythian relationships to be abnormal in this regard, sometimes entailing the holding of wives in common.<sup>71</sup> Even if local non-Greeks played some part in the creation of the cult at Apatouron – and there is no reason at all to think that they did – it is

<sup>70</sup> Pace, most recently, Ustinova (1999) 43, with bibliography.

<sup>71</sup> Strabo 7. 3. 7, alluding to Plato's plans for his ideal state in *Republic* book 5.



hard to imagine how they could have maintained (indeed, been permitted to maintain) ongoing involvement with the cult of Aphrodite Ourania there. For although they are credited with worshipping both Aphrodite Ourania and Heracles (Hdt. 4. 59), it is not at all clear how such attitudes may have impacted upon the cult at Apatouron.<sup>72</sup>

### Mythmaking and Public Performance in the Bosporus

Strabo does not explain how he came to know of the aetiological myth at Apatouron. He certainly does not say that he visited the place, nor does he do anything to suggest as much. While such a visit cannot be excluded completely, more probably he had the story from sources which may have been written or oral. Clearly, Hecataeus said a little about Apatouron, so that it would not be strange if the subsequent geographical tradition had included it. The possibilities of oral information are fathomless, and might include even Queen Pythodoris herself, especially as there was a royal concern with the cult and, it seems, a particular relevance for women in the rituals there, as we shall see. However, Strabo seems to point us especially to local creativity, while his language may offer a clue. For he describes Heracles' hiding-place as a *keuthmōn*. This is a poetical word, rare in prose. Indeed, Strabo's own use of the word illustrates its poetic flavour. For while it appears five times in the seventeen books of the *Geography*, there is at least a hint of poetry about each occasion. On three of those occasions it resides in poetry that Strabo has chosen to quote.<sup>73</sup> Aside from our myth on Apatouron, the only other occasion (12. 8. 19) is not in a poetic quotation, but is in a context where Strabo shows that he is drawing upon a wealth of mythical accounts, of which some will have been poetic (though he names only Xanthus the Lydian, a historian). Strabo's heavy use of poetic texts is well known: it is manifest not only in his frequent quotation of verse, but also in his broader commitment to poetry as a source of importance for his *Geography*. He is well-known for his commitment to Homer – for him 'the first geographer' – but we should observe also his recurrent concern with other kinds of verse, including tragedy and even comedy as a source of insight both into his broad themes and on detail regarding local specifics in the course of his great work.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, his use of *keuthmōn*

<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, note that Herodotus chooses to list Ourania beside Heracles, conceivably more than coincidence.

<sup>73</sup> Strabo 3. 2. 11; 9. 2. 34; 14. 5. 4.

<sup>74</sup> See e.g. Clarke (1997).

in his summary of the myth at Apatouron gives some reason to suspect that poetry figured among his sources, including particularly local poetry on this very local theme.<sup>75</sup>

Fortunately, we know rather a lot about the poetic culture of the Bosporan kingdom, albeit in a fragmentary way. Given the recurrent concern of Bosporan rulers to engage with Greek culture at large and to foster it too across the kingdom, we may be sure enough that they offered patronage for poets and performers of different kinds. It suffices to recall the Bosporan king’s interest in bringing the famous citharode Stratonicus to the Bosporus in the fourth century B.C. There he played in theatres that are said to have existed in many of the Bosporan communities.<sup>76</sup> While we need not suppose that these were all great edifices of stone, recent excavation on the acropolis at Nymphaeum is revealing just such a stone theatre, very probably built in the fourth century B.C.<sup>77</sup> Its grand entrance complex includes an inscribed dedication to Dionysus, which attests the sponsorship of a member of the Bosporan elite (SEG 52. 741):

Θεοπροπίδης Μεγακλέος τὴν εἴσοδον ἀνέθηκεν Διονύσῳ ἀγωνοθετέων,  
Λεόκωνος ἄρχοντος Βοσπόρου καὶ Θεοδοσίας καὶ τῆς Σινδικῆς πάσης καὶ  
Τορετέων καὶ Δανδαρίων καὶ Ψησῶν.

Theopropides, son of Megakles, dedicated the entrance to Dionysus, being agonothete, while Leucon was ruler of Bosporus and Theodosia and all Sindike and Toretæ and Dandarii and Psessi.

Theopropides, son of the grandly named Megacles, cannot have built this entrance without at least the tacit support of Leucon, his king. As Isocrates’ *Trapeziticus* shows well enough at the beginning of the fourth century, Bosporan rulers kept a sharp eye on the kingdom’s elite. Accordingly, the other agonothete known from the kingdom (also in the fourth century), a certain Mestor, was also in a sense representing the regime when he made a dedication to Apollo, whose festival he had overseen (CIRB 75). The prominent mention of the ruler and his titles in the dedications of both agonothetes speak volumes about the need among the elite to include the ruler in such major acts of religion, cult and cultural sponsorship.

<sup>75</sup> Any attempt to identify this cleft with the ‘Sindian vagina’ of Hipponax fr. 2a West (as Musbakhova (2014), mistranslating) is undercut by the fact that Hipponax’s sexual meaning was clear to Hesychius and other ancients: see Tokhtas’yev (2002). Some may see sexuality in this landscape, nevertheless.

<sup>76</sup> Esp. Polyænus, 5. 44; Braund and Hall (2014), where the historicity of Aristocrates’ visit is not excluded.

<sup>77</sup> Sokolova (2002): her excavations continue; cf. Braund and Hall (2014).

All this sharpens the question of what was actually staged in these theatres, and in other places around the kingdom, not least in time of festival. Some of this was prose: we may infer as much from the readings of the epiphanies of Parthenos that Syrisus had given at Crimean Chersonesus (IOSPE i<sup>2</sup> 344). We may compare also the account of Dio Chrysostom (however imaginary) about his philosophical disquisition at a gathering hastily set up in the centre of Olbia (*Or.* 36. 17). Performances need be neither poetry nor particularly dramatic. Music and singing were also important, as Stratonicus' visit reminds us. However, the extraordinary progress made in recent years in our understanding of the theatre culture of another part of the colonial periphery, the world of Magna Graecia, suggests that there was ample scope in the Bosphorus for the creation of local dramas and verse of other kinds in addition to versions of famous Athenian dramas.<sup>78</sup> Terracottas around the kingdom, not least on the Taman peninsula, demonstrate a substantial engagement with theatre culture there. For example, a terracotta plaque of the fourth century BC shows comic actors wearing satyr masks in a Dionysiac scene that was found (appropriately) in a later winery at Cepi. Or there is the abundance of terracotta figurines including also actors and Dionysiac images, deposited at Bolshaya Bliznitsa not far from Phanagoria.<sup>79</sup> It is important to understand that this theatre-culture was also the culture of religious festival, a bright moment in the year and a connection with the divine. The deposition of theatrical figurines, masks and the like in burials from southern Italy to the northern Black Sea attest to the life-affirming emotions of particular performances and religious theatre in general.<sup>80</sup>

### **Sosicrates and Sostratus, Writers of Phanagoria**

Inscriptions indicate the existence of local poets, both through their verse and through their subjects. From Panticapaeum, for example, we have the verse epitaph of a certain Smikros, who died around 300 BC and is described as a pupil of the Muses and a teacher.<sup>81</sup> Of particular interest for Apaturon, however, are two writers of Phanagoria, who are commonly

<sup>78</sup> Boshier (2012).

<sup>79</sup> On the satyr-relief from Cepi, see Zhuravlev and Lomtadze (2013); the relevant burial at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa (Tomb 1) was also deposited in the fourth century BC: on this burial see below p. 272. I am grateful to J. R. Green for numerous insights on these terracottas.

<sup>80</sup> Among much recent work, Slater (2004) catches these emotions especially well; Dionysiac tragedy too is life-affirming in its own way. Cf. also Green (1982) on developments from figurines to masks.

<sup>81</sup> CIRB 118; cf. Twardecki (2009), noting also Strabo 2. 1. 16 on poetry in the Bosphorus.

thought to be the same man, namely Sosicrates and Sostratus. However, there is no strong reason to identify them, while a web of doubt surrounds much of the writing attributed to them.<sup>82</sup> Stephanus of Byzantium mentions an author whom he names as Sostratus of Phanagoria, whose work (nature unstated) included the use of the ethnic for a female of Carian Mycale (*s.v.* Mycale). Presumably, it was the rarity of such a form that earned this exceptional citation for Sostratus. Most likely Sostratus had used it in denoting Demeter, whose cult there was especially famous, so that she was by far the best known female of Mycale.<sup>83</sup> If that is right, we may wonder whether Sostratus' use of such an epithet for Demeter of Mycale might have arisen from the Phanagoritan's inevitable concern with the goddess of Apatouron and perhaps even her own epithet. Meanwhile, a Sosicrates of Phanagoria is named by Athenaeus (13. 590a) as author of a work on the *erōmenoi* of gods and goddesses, *Eoioi*.<sup>84</sup> It would be surprising to find Demeter of Mycale in such a work, but of course not impossible. These are the only two attestations which make explicit that we have here Phanagoritan authors. However, we also have information about other works attributed to a Sostratus. Three of these have been taken (though not with universal assent) to refer to our Phanagoritan of that (very common) name. The notion may well be correct, for reasons we shall see, but one must be clear that Sostratus is a common Greek name by any standards, so that there is no room for certainty that any of these did (or did not) in fact belong to the Phanagoritan.<sup>85</sup> The first of these three works by a Sostratus is summarised at length by Eustathius. This was clearly a substantial poem (in elegiac verse). Its subject was the long and extraordinary life of Tiresias, who was born female (on this version)<sup>86</sup> but in the course of a long life was changed back and forth between male to female by various deities.<sup>87</sup> Immediately we can see the potential relevance of such a work to Aphrodite Ourania, who had inflicted the 'female disease' on the Scythians. A Phanagoritan Sostratus might very well write on such a topic,

<sup>82</sup> Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983) 352–4 support the identification, but with caution. O'Hara (1996) illustrates many of the doubts involved, including links with the notorious Ptolemy Chennus: on whom, Ni-Mheallaigh (2014) 116–26.

<sup>83</sup> On her cult there, Fragoulaki (2013) 137.

<sup>84</sup> Further, Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983) nos. 781–2.

<sup>85</sup> Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983) 354 draw attention to Strabo's teacher of that name, Sostratus of Nysa, who may be responsible for the grammatical fragments that have survived under the name Sostratus (though observe also Stephanus' man, for example, and others: O'Hara (1996)). On the very many issues at stake with these awkward fragments, see Ceccarelli, *BNJ s.v.* Sostratos (23).

<sup>86</sup> Further, Loraux (1995).

<sup>87</sup> Eustathius 1665. 48, with Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983) 353.

though we can only speculate on any direct link between the work and the cult. We should note too, however, the theme of prophecy that attended both Tiresias and the androgynous Scythians, the Enarees.

For according to Herodotus (4. 67), the Enarees themselves claimed that they had received a gift of prophecy from Aphrodite Ourania. They used the malleable and characterful bark of the lime (alias linden) tree, not the tree more usually linked with Aphrodite, the myrrh. The lime tree was important in Scythia, since its wood was excellent for carving, while its soft bark was good for making even musical instruments. It was undoubtedly important too in the famous Scythian production of honey, as in apiculture elsewhere. The notably pyramidal shape of the young lime tree may help to account for its association with Aphrodite Ourania, who favoured that shape.<sup>88</sup> However, it is also clear enough that the significance of the lime tree was more substantial among Greeks than we yet understand, so that an Aristophanic jibe at the poet Cinesias as 'lime wood man' continues to excite scholarly controversy. In view of Cinesias' reputation in Athenian comedy, his case may well involve Aphrodite and androgyny too.<sup>89</sup>

Meanwhile, we may also note the connections between the Lime-tree (Philyra) who was daughter of Ocean and (appalled) mother of Chiron the centaur and tutor of Achilles.<sup>90</sup> While Scythians are unlikely to have known much of her, poetry on Tiresias might well explore his dealings with Chiron and his participation at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, herself a daughter of Ocean. In fact, Eustathius says that Sostratus' poem related Tiresias' presence at the famous wedding, for it was there that he cast aspersions on the beauty of Aphrodite, by judging one of the Graces to be more beautiful than the goddess herself. The furious goddess turned him into an old woman, according to Sostratus' poem. Since these themes of marriage, motherhood and reproduction are also central concerns of Ourania, together with the theme of sex-changing, we seem to have here a poem well suited to the thought-world of Phanagoria, and yet a poem which is also at home in the broader sweep of Greek culture more generally. However, the modern suggestion that this elegiac *Tiresias* might belong to Sosicrates' *Eoioi* is not very convincing in view of the evident scale of the poem on Tiresias. It seems better to resist any temptation to identify the two poets, while instead observing their shared concern with

<sup>88</sup> Above, p. 196.

<sup>89</sup> See *Ar. Birds* 1378 with Dunbar's extensive remarks ad loc. The context suggests that flexibility was at least part of the jibe, arising from his apparently distorted leg.

<sup>90</sup> E.g. Hyginus, *Fab.* 138.

goddesses, sex and the rest at Phanagoria, beside the great sanctuary of Aphrodite Ourania.

Much the same may be said of the second work attributed to a Sostratus (of unspecified origin). Eustathius, again, states that Achilles was killed by Paris with an ivory bow which he had received from his lover and archery-teacher, Apollo.<sup>91</sup> Here we at least have an *erōmenos* of a god, so that this might indeed belong to a work such as that of Sosicrates, but that is hardly enough to support the identification with Sostratus of Phanagoria, even if mention of Achilles would also suit his city well enough.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, the third work of a Sostratus to be attributed to the Phanagoritan is appropriate to his city in a rather different way. For this is a work on hunting, in at least two books, perhaps in verse. Its general flavour can only be guessed from an excerpt from the second book, summarised by Stobaeus.<sup>93</sup> Here we have the story of Cyanippus and Leucone, newly married. The former's eagerness for the hunt causes his jealous wife to follow him into the woods and to hide in bushes. Her husband's hounds see sharp movement in the bushes and tear her apart as if she were an animal. At the sight, Cyanippus kills himself too. Themes of Aphrodite are clear enough here, though one may doubt that they were sustained through the whole work. The over-eager hunter may recall Hippolytus, as well as Cephalus, Tanais, and others. Of course, in this story there has been a marriage, but the young man has neglected it in favour of the chase, so that he is not so very different from Hippolytus and may be seen as insulting not only Aphrodite but Ourania in particular, given her special concern with marriage. Stobaeus' summary says nothing of divine agency, but the wife's decision to follow her husband and the movement of the bushes may well be the work of the goddess. Evidently, this story, if not the whole work, was of particular relevance at Phanagoria too. All the more so, because Cyanippus is named as a Thessalian: Phanagoria was founded from Teos, which in turn was founded from Thessaly.<sup>94</sup> The connections are significant enough, but they are not sufficient to demonstrate that this was indeed our Phanagoritan Sostratus.

<sup>91</sup> Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983) 353 (FGrH 23F6).

<sup>92</sup> Note p. 272 on Achilles at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa. Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983) 353 (FGrH 23F6) observe the apparent confusion of Helenus and Paris in this excerpt, which might encourage the suspicion that here (and here alone) Eustathius has given Sostratus instead of Sosicrates.

<sup>93</sup> Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983) 353 (FGrH 23F4 with much further discussion by Ceccarelli, *BNJ* ad loc.).

<sup>94</sup> Braund (2014a).

### Myth, Landscape, Cult

While Heracles' *keuthmōn* suggests verse, its central importance in the cult aetiology also encourages the suspicion that there was a particular depression in the landscape at Apatouron in which his hiding-place was imagined locally. We may recall, for example, the huge 'footprint' in the ground near Tyras, which locals pointed out as a sign of Heracles' passing (and perhaps more besides),<sup>95</sup> or indeed the earthworks of the Crimea which in Herodotus' day were ascribed to the digging of the sons of the Scythian slaves of yore (Hdt. 4. 3). To locate the myth in the landscape at Apatouron was to validate and display it, while there were opportunities too for special ritual at the spot. Heracles himself seems not to figure substantially in the cult at Apatouron, for the various dedications to Ourania there make no mention of him. He seems to have had a cult-centre just across the straits at Heracleum near Porthmium. However, there is also a sense in which the hero is everywhere across the region – the forefather of the Scythians (at least as they said in Olbia: Hdt. 4. 8–10), who left his mark in different ways at a range of locations, as at Tyras and in the Apatouron myth. It is not hard to understand, therefore, why Bosporan rulers claimed descent from him under the Principate and perhaps much earlier.<sup>96</sup>

Elsewhere in the Asiatic Bosporus, the town of Cimmericum seems to have been imagined locally as the place where the hero brought from the very Underworld the monstrous canine Cerberus. The town was probably also known as Cerberion, according to the elder Pliny.<sup>97</sup> The remarkable landscape of the Taman peninsula, particularly its mud volcanoes, helps to account for the notion that here lay a route to the Underworld. This is indeed, as Ellis Minns observed, 'a land weird enough with its mud volcanoes and marshes to supply the groundwork for a picture of the Lower World'.<sup>98</sup> Minns is right, but the landscape is not forbidding, even so. For the most part the 'volcanoes' take the form of active pools in the earth's surface, as illustrated, while its marshes are no longer extensive, as they seem to have been in antiquity. In recent years these marshes have been key to an important project on the geography of the region in antiquity,

<sup>95</sup> Hdt. 4. 82. An isolated tradition about Cadmus' footprint and the River Ismenos in Boeotia gives a hint of what further stories may have been spun around this landmark: FGtH 23F5.

<sup>96</sup> Together with Poseidon, through his son Eumolpus. Further, CIRB 1046 (c. AD 100, Taman peninsula); cf. 53, with commentary ad loc. On coinage: Cotys I's interest in Inachians should include Heracles, one Inachian among very many; see p. 158.

<sup>97</sup> Pliny, *NH* 6. 18 (where the text is less certain than one might wish), with Braund (2010a).

<sup>98</sup> So Minns (1913) 436.





Figure 13 The ‘mud volcano’ at Mayskaya Gora, above Phanagoria

which indicates that the Taman region was still more watery than today.<sup>99</sup> Meanwhile, we should also be clear that, as in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, marshes were a characteristic feature of the Underworld, as Minns was aware.

However, it is the volcanic activity in the area that is particularly striking. We saw with Artemis Agrotera how that might even contribute archaeologically, for it was the eruption of a volcano there (called Boris and Gleb) that gave us remains of her temple.<sup>100</sup> We may well understand the appearance in antiquity too of strange remains brought forth under such circumstances, even if we hesitate to take at face value the example described by the creative Phlegon of Tralles (*On Marvels* 19). For in the second century AD he writes of gigantic bones that were brought up in this way in the Bosphorus, which locals cast into the Sea of Azov. Phlegon cites as his source a writer of the Black Sea region, a certain Theopompus of Sinope, otherwise unknown and possibly invented. It has been suggested that these bones may have been real and found near Phanagoria (though Phlegon is

<sup>99</sup> Schlotzhauer and Zhuravlev (2014).

<sup>100</sup> Above, p. 101.



not specific), and that they were the bones of prehistoric creatures.<sup>101</sup> Much depends on our taste for rationalisations and our assessment of Phlegon, but he is at least correct that earthquakes may occur in the Bosporus. With that in mind, we should remember too that Strabo has given us only a very abbreviated form of the myth at Apatouron. In his summary version, we are not told what was done with all the Giants after Heracles had despatched them. And yet that is a question of the greatest importance in understanding the links between the myth and the landscape.

Fortunately, we are quite well informed about the fate of such Giants elsewhere around the Greek world. In Greek myth the bodies of vanquished Giants were commonly placed back under the earth from which they had been born, and there they were reckoned to be the cause of all manner of seismic and volcanic activity. Under Etna, for example, lay the Giants Enceladus and/or Typhon and/or Briareus. Alternatively, Typhon was also held to lie beneath the island of Ischia (Pithecusae), one of the Phlegraean islands, where other Giants lay too. Strabo did not choose to pursue the matter in the Bosporus, but he had done so in an earlier part of his *Geography* in addressing the volcanic activity all around southwest Italy. He particularly approved Pindar's formulation: 'Now both Sicily and the sea-fenced cliffs beyond Cumae press hard upon the shaggy breast of Typhon' (Strabo 5. 4. 9). The volcanic activity of the Taman peninsula was less striking than its Italian counterpart, which may explain why Strabo says nothing about it. Given that omission, he did not need to bring in the Giants as the putative cause. However, for the local population of the Asiatic Bosporus, in particular, this volcanic activity was an ever-present fact of life. The Apatouron myth offered an explanation of these remarkable and dangerous physical phenomena, and it did so in a manner which accorded well with the general (if sometimes rather inconsistent) notions of Greek myth about buried Giants.<sup>102</sup>

Elsewhere in Greek myth too, Heracles is often seen dealing with Giants, though at Apatouron the detail of concealment in the *keuthmôn* is a local feature, as we have seen. Meanwhile, given the concern with Tiresias at Phanagoria, we should also observe that Pindar has Tiresias himself foretell Heracles' giant-killing exploits, here located in southern Italy, as befitted the Sicilian victor for whom he was writing.<sup>103</sup> Giants were rapists

<sup>101</sup> Mayor (2011) 196.

<sup>102</sup> Paus. 8. 29. 1–3. Their iconography was also inconsistent, ranging between armed hoplites and monstrous creatures of the earth with snakes for legs: LIMC *s.v.*

<sup>103</sup> *Nemean* 1, esp. 60–9; cf. Dougherty (1993). The hypotheses of West (2005) interestingly entails both the Taman volcanoes and Tiresias.

by nature: Pindar also refers to a Giant – Porphyryon – who was killed while trying to rape Hera. The myth seems to have entailed Hera's appeal to Zeus and Heracles, who responded by killing him.<sup>104</sup> The Giants' violent desire for a goddess shows their characteristic *hubris*, while Hera's appeal to Zeus and Heracles follows much the same path as Aphrodite's appeal to Heracles, so that we see how the Apatouron myth accords with broader notions in Greek mythology. Not that Heracles was the only saviour of goddesses assaulted by Giants. We may compare for example, the Boeotian giant Tityus and his attempted rape of Leto, for which he was killed by her divine offspring, Artemis and Apollo.<sup>105</sup> The Apatouron myth combines recurrent themes of Greek myth as a whole (rapist Giants, Aphrodite's deceit, Heracles' Giant-killing) and locates them in a landscape of volcanic activity and Heracles' cleft that gave these themes special meaning in this local cult place.

At the same time, the whole conception of the conflict between Aphrodite Ourania and the Giants must be understood in the context of Greek notions of cosmic order and disorder. For, as her name declares, Ourania (the offspring of Sky-Uranos) is a force of sky, while the Giants are very much the children of Earth. Central to the many meanings of Gigantomachy was the attempt of the earth-born to rise to the sky and oust the Olympian deities from their place there. Olympian victory kept the cosmos in its established order, with sky above and earth below, while the loftier values appropriate to the Olympian *ouranioi* (unsatisfactory though they might often prove to be) thereby prevailed over the violent disorder of the earth-born.<sup>106</sup> Plato, in particular, brings out that cosmic significance, while also recoiling from any notion of its simple truth. For him Gigantomachy served to express a contest between different modes of philosophy, in which the Olympian mode is to be preferred.<sup>107</sup> While the myth at Apatouron was very local insofar as it was keyed to the local landscape, these much larger themes are no less important there too. For the myth shows the earth-born assault on the heavenly Aphrodite herself, while their sexual ambitions exemplify well enough their contempt for law, order, morality and the status of the fragrant deity. However, the victory of Aphrodite Ourania shows that her resources (with deception to the

<sup>104</sup> *Pythian* 8. 10–15 with Ps. Apollod. *Bibl.* 1. 36; cf. Ar. *Birds* 1249 with Dunbar (1995) 7–8 and ad loc.

<sup>105</sup> Further, Cairns (1996).

<sup>106</sup> As Hardie puts it, addressing Gigantomachy especially in Strabo's contemporary, Virgil: 'Gigantomachy ... is a myth that concerns the struggle between cosmos and chaos at the most universal level' (Hardie (1986) 84).

<sup>107</sup> Esp. at *Sophist* 246a; cf. *Symp.* 190c (where Ourania herself is on hand); *Rep.* 378c.

fore) are more than a match for this terrifying pack of Giants, albeit with help from Heracles. In that way, the myth not only explains and imparts meaning to the striking landscape, but also demonstrates the awesome powers of the goddess at Apatouron. It is not hard to see why the myth was related there.

It was much more than artistic taste, for example, that caused the defeat of Giants to be portrayed on major public buildings. At Athens we find Gigantomachy on the Parthenon, where it featured as a metopal theme,<sup>108</sup> while Phidias' statue of the goddess there bore a shield which showed a Gigantomachy also on its inside. Remarkably, Gigantomachy was also prominent on the *peplos*, the woven garment which the Panathenaic procession presented to Athena each year.<sup>109</sup> It seems that in Athenian tradition, these and further references to Gigantomachy entailed both the larger themes of cosmic order and the much more specific contribution of Athena herself against the Giants.<sup>110</sup> Accordingly, we find Gigantomachy displayed too on major Athenian vases, of which some made their way to become dedications at the colonial frontier.<sup>111</sup> The example of Athena at Athens can only encourage the suspicion, therefore, that Aphrodite's similar success against Giants was featured prominently in the public art and ritual objects of her cult at Apatouron. While it is thanks to literary evidence (Strabo) that we learn of the myth, there is no reason at all to suppose that it figured only in texts and oral tradition. It would surely be remarkable if Gigantomachy did not feature in many different forms at Apatouron, rather as at Athens, where there were no volcanoes to be explained.

Whether the sanctuary at Apatouron boasted a theatre of any kind is quite unknown. However, the theatrical potential of the myth is evident, as has been well observed.<sup>112</sup> And we have seen a general theatre culture around the Bosporus, where Ourania was key to all, not only to Apatouron. In view of her importance, she very probably featured on stage and in the public sculpture of other theatres around the kingdom, not

<sup>108</sup> Schwab (2004).

<sup>109</sup> The outer face of the shield featured a much-discussed Amazonomachy: Arafat (1986); cf. Stewart (1995) esp. 585 on Parthenon sculpture, the acropolis and Amazons more generally. Note also Eros in action against the Giants, and his association with Heracles: Schwab (1996) 86. *Peplos*: Stamatopoulou (2012).

<sup>110</sup> Notably, Aristotle fr. 637 with Neils (2009). On Gigantomachy elsewhere on the acropolis too, see Moore (1995); Hurwit (1999).

<sup>111</sup> Torelli (2004), primarily concerned with Gravisca.

<sup>112</sup> Tokhtas'yev (1983), stressing comedy, which will not have been the whole story. Note the terracotta comic Heracles from Chersonesus, Saprykin (forthcoming).

least in the foundational act of conquering the Giants. For some sense of what was possible, it is worth considering the sculpture that adorned the theatre of Roman Corinth, not because it demonstrates anything about Apatouron of course, but because it shows how Olympian battles with Giants and Amazons could form the decoration of a theatrical space. An exemplary study of the theatre at Roman Corinth shows friezes at three levels, respectively showing Gigantomachy, Amazonomachy and an expansive version of the Labours of Heracles, which include his mastery of earth-born Antaeus.<sup>113</sup> Aphrodite herself features prominently, with Hephaestus, as often. By Strabo's day the Gigantomachy of the great altar at Pergamon seems to have been a model for public sculpture across Asia Minor,<sup>114</sup> so that we may suspect its influence also in the Bosporus, whether in local public sculpture there or, more generally, in contributing to local conceptions of Gigantomachy, wherein the cult-myth constitutes a rather special example. It is encouraging to find similar themes in the sculpture from the theatre at Crimean Chersonesus.<sup>115</sup> There is almost no direct evidence about Gigantomachy in Bosporan public art, but we do have the fragment of a frieze from the Asiatic Bosporus on which a snake-legged creature seems to have figured. The stone was lost in the course of the Second World War, but we may well have here part of a Gigantomachy. Its discovery at the site of Phanagoria may encourage thoughts of Apatouron, but there was no archaeological context.<sup>116</sup> It would surely have been extraordinary if the sanctuary at Apatouron had not, in any case, featured Gigantomachy in a prominent manner, in view of its myth and the recurrence of the theme elsewhere in Greek public art in religious contexts.

These various considerations reveal how much Strabo's summary has omitted. Has he also omitted Hephaestus? There is no sign of him in Strabo's version. However, he was of course the husband of Aphrodite, albeit, arguably, only later in her biography. He was also at home among volcanoes, here as also in Magna Graecia. Kabeiroi, often his associates, have been claimed near Phanagoria because of a passage of Strabo, which in fact relates to a city of Asia Minor, a great distance away.<sup>117</sup> More interesting, but also without warrant, they have been seen too in the iconography of

<sup>113</sup> Sturgeon (1977).

<sup>114</sup> Sturgeon (1977) 125; Mass-Pairauld (2007).

<sup>115</sup> Saprykin (forthcoming). On Cepi, see above and Kharko (1941).

<sup>116</sup> Esp. Kharko (1941), illustrating the paltry fragment, where the eye of faith sees Heracles' leg too; cf. Savostina (2012) 184. The fragmentary frieze from Yubileynoye (Taman) attests Bosporan taste for such monumental art: esp. Savostina (2001).

<sup>117</sup> Strabo 12. 3. 30–1. Dubois (1996) no. 85 is an isolated instance of them at Olbia, but says nothing about Phanagoria.

the coinage of Phanagoria: we shall see that the head(s) there may very well be Hephaestus himself.<sup>118</sup>

Meanwhile, we should appreciate too the militancy of Aphrodite Ourania in and beyond the myth. Her concern for order, marriage and the like coexisted with what could be a distinctly military mien. After all, in the myth she not only deceives the Giants but brings about their deaths. A militant Aphrodite may seem less familiar with killing than, for example, Parthenos the huntress, but we should be clear that Aphrodite Ourania might well be imagined and represented as an armed warrior. She appeared as such at her sanctuary on Cythera, which Pausanias reckoned to be her most ancient among the Greeks.<sup>119</sup> While Homer's Zeus urges Aphrodite to leave the battlefield at Troy to Ares, Aphrodite (whether Ourania or not) appears in literature and art often enough with weaponry (sometimes when otherwise nude) and even in full armour.<sup>120</sup> There was analogy as well as polarity in the relationship of love and war in Greek thought, as well illustrated not only by the sexual relationship of Aphrodite and Ares, but also by the familiar poetic conceit that the lover was also a warrior – Ovid's *militat omnis amans*.<sup>121</sup> Of particular importance too was the substantial risk of death involved in the production of children, through which the mother might resemble the warrior in battle.<sup>122</sup> However, in Strabo's account Aphrodite's weapon is not of a straightforwardly soldierly kind: she uses *apatē* and Heracles to kill the Giants. Accordingly, there is no particular reason to suppose that Aphrodite here was armed. We shall see that Bosphoran coin images present her quite differently, veiled and draped. Such images accord well with the myth, which shows her ability to kill even without her own use of violence.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, her special abilities were more than a match even for the mighty Giants, whose enormous and yet crude physical capabilities, individually and collectively, had been crushed by Bosphoran Ourania's rather different and superior powers. We are not told why Heracles had come to help, but we may reasonably infer that Ourania's powers had been deployed to manipulate him too.<sup>124</sup> It is hard to gauge from Strabo's short summary of the tale whether

<sup>118</sup> Further, Braund (2012).

<sup>119</sup> Paus. 3. 23. 1; cf. 1. 14. 7 with Stager (2005); Pirenne-Delforge (2008) 257–8; cf. Budin (2004) 110.

<sup>120</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 5. 428–9; Flemberg (1995). Cf. Gow and Page (1968) 2. 334 on Leonidas of (Spartan) Taras. Examples of armed Aphrodite are gathered by Stewart (2012) 295 n. 68; cf. Graf (1985) 311 and the important discussion of Treister (2015) esp. 314, in a Bosphoran context.

<sup>121</sup> Ovid, *Amores* 1. 9 with e.g. McKeown (1995).

<sup>122</sup> The classic study is Loraux (1981).

<sup>123</sup> On Aphrodite, Ares and violence: Pironti (2007); (2010); cf. Rudhardt (2006).

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Pironti (2007) 136–42.

it may have been important in the Bosphorus that both the Giants and Aphrodite were, according to Hesiod, born from the severed genitals of Ouranos himself.<sup>125</sup> Since she needed no ordinary weaponry, we may well be attracted by the possibility that her cult-statue at Apatouron resembled the famous Pheidian image at Olympia in being well draped and demure, as the goddess evidently appears, seated, on Bosphoran coins of the Roman period.<sup>126</sup> All that was the clear antithesis to the disorderly lust of the rapist Giants, as also to other aspects of Aphrodite herself.

### Locating Apatouron

Unfortunately, Apatouron has yet to be located, though many a claim has been made.<sup>127</sup> Strabo offers the myth-etymology in the context of his account of Phanagoria, whether understood as the city or the ‘island’ upon which the city stood:

Εἰσπλεύσαντι δ’ εἰς τὴν Κοροκονδαμίτιν ἢ τε Φαναγόρειά ἐστι πόλις ἀξιόλογος καὶ Κῆποι καὶ Ἑρμώνασσα καὶ τὸ Ἀπάτουρον τὸ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἱερόν. ὧν ἡ Φαναγόρεια καὶ οἱ Κῆποι κατὰ τὴν λεχθεῖσαν νῆσον ἴδρυνται εἰσπλέοντι ἐν ἀριστερᾷ, αἱ δὲ λοιπαὶ πόλεις ἐν δεξιᾷ πέραν Ὑπάνιος ἐν τῇ Σινδικῇ.

For someone who has entered Corocondamitis, there is Phanagoria, a noteworthy city and Cepi and Hermonassa and Apatouron, the hieron of Aphrodite. Of these, Phanagoria and Cepi on the aforementioned island are situated on the left of someone sailing in, while the rest of the cities are on the right, beyond the Hypanis in Sindike. (Strabo 11.2.10)

Changes in the landscape and Strabo’s text together leave a range of geographical questions unanswered. Strabo makes it wholly explicit that the place Apatouron is a *hieron* of Aphrodite: there is no indication at all in his words that it is a settlement of any kind, as sometimes supposed.

<sup>125</sup> *Theogony* 186–200, where the Giants are armoured and armed with (phallic?) long spears. Further, Hansen (2000); Pironti (2007) esp. 69–74.

<sup>126</sup> Paus. 6. 25. 1, coyly contrasting this demure Aphrodite with the goddess (also there, separately) as Pandemos, he tells us, riding a billy-goat: further, Stewart (2012) 292–3; cf. Pironti (2007); Schoch (2009). With related concerns, Lightfoot (2003) esp. 441–3. The Pheidian image’s tortoise is attested in late Hellenistic-Roman images from Dura Europus (Louvre; see Cumont 1924) and elsewhere (Berlin, provenance unknown), but, while the animal suited Elis (see the important terracotta evidence: Froning (2005); Froning and Zimmermann-Elseify (2010) and other places), the (largely seasonal) swan was key on the north coast of the Black Sea. If Ourania’s tortoise came from the east, as often argued, it was certainly at home in Elis, where only modern farming methods have depleted its once-burgeoning numbers locally.

<sup>127</sup> Kuznetsov (2014) gives the state of play.

Accordingly, it was not one of the *poleis* in Sindike, but stood on the same shore as Tean Phanagoria, Milesian Cepi and Mytilenian Hermonassa. Unfortunately, however, in this passage Strabo does nothing to indicate more precisely where it stood in relation to those three cities: we do not know for sure whether there is some meaningful sequence in his list of places here, or whether (as seems more likely) he adds Apatouron as a significant extra feature of the region after he has listed the cities. He takes us from the cities on the left to the cities on the right, but makes it clear only that Apatouron stands on the left and that it is not a city. Strabo's text requires great care, for it has often been misinterpreted, especially when studied only in translation.

Shortly after, in drawing his account of this region to a close, the geographer's focus comes to rest upon Phanagoria. He stresses its pre-eminence as the *metropolis* of the inhabitants of the Asiatic Bosphorans (as Panticapaeum was the *metropolis* of their European counterparts). In so doing, he also makes it clear that he has in mind especially the city's relationship with the non-Greek population of the region. He identifies an *emporion* to which the non-Greeks of the region bring their wares, calling it *ta Phanagoreia*, so that it is evidently in some sense distinct from the city proper. In sum, Strabo concludes this general description, in which the *hieron* of Aphrodite figures only fleetingly, by asserting the special importance of Phanagoria on the eastern side of the Bosphorus. The reality of this important city is duly confirmed by the very extensive archaeological remains near Sennaya, stretching over 60 hectares, with more under water, and showing a habitation layer of up to seven metres.

It is at this point that Strabo mentions the sanctuary for a second time, a 'notable *hieron*' of Aphrodite Apatouros 'at Phanagoria'. The crux of the problem here is whether this is the *hieron* that he had mentioned shortly before or whether this is another *hieron*. However, the problem is not hard to solve, despite years of scholarly dispute. For Strabo certainly does nothing to indicate that this notable *hieron* is a different *hieron* from the one he has already picked out for comment beside the three cities. The absence of any such indication of difference is all the more telling when we observe that he is very clear about such a distinction at Chersonesus, where he is very clear about two local cult-centres of Parthenos, one in the city and one outside it.<sup>128</sup> His presentation of Apatouron is not like that at all. He first mentions the *hieron* of the goddess on the same shore as Phanagoria

<sup>128</sup> Above p. 55. Kuznetsov (2014) rightly dispenses with the widespread notion that there were two Apatourons, as well as many another absurdity which we may therefore pass over in silence.

and then, while expanding his remarks about Phanagoria refers to a notable *hieron* of the goddess 'at Phanagoria'. True, our author could have expressed himself more clearly, but to posit two sanctuaries (and Strabo's silence on there being two) is perverse. All the more so when it would lead to the unlikely conclusion that the cult-centre at Phanagoria was notable, while the other was somehow not, even though Strabo had already picked it out for special mention beside the cities of the region. There was a single, notable *hieron*, which (like the *emporion*) was in Phanagoria and yet somehow distinct from it. That sense of a distinct identity is repeated in Stephanus' treatment of the place, which was almost certainly mentioned separately from Phanagoria as early as Hecataeus, as we have seen.<sup>129</sup> In view of the sprawling city revealed by archaeology, that is not at all difficult to imagine, even though we remain ignorant of the detail.

Meanwhile, the epigraphic record is concerned overwhelmingly with the notable *hieron* at Apatouron, as we shall see, though there is also a scatter of occurrences of Aphrodite in small inscriptions too, which may or may not have been linked to her cult as Ourania at Apatouron.<sup>130</sup> Of particular interest in that regard is the sanctuary found at Nymphaeum, which is best known for its trireme *Isis*, but has been adjudged a sanctuary of Aphrodite, on the rather unsatisfactory grounds that graffiti there mention her – and, be it noted, Apollo.<sup>131</sup> Among other remains we may observe also a fine Hellenistic head of Aphrodite from Gorgippia, but such occasional objects cannot tell us much on their own.<sup>132</sup> Certainly, Strabo offers no comment on any aspect of Aphrodite in the Bosporan kingdom except the goddess of Apatouron 'at Phanagoria'. His concern with the location is all the more striking when we observe that he nowhere identifies her as Ourania, which is her recurrent title in the numerous inscribed dedications that have survived. The sense of place was clearly important, rather as we have seen with the mythical landscape, for the dedications too repeatedly locate her at Apatouron. The fact that we cannot locate the place with precision should not obscure its especial importance in the cult of the goddess. Taken together, the toponym and epithet suggest very much the combined sense of local and universal that we have seen in other ways. As Ourania, the goddess appears all over the Greek world and beyond, but

<sup>129</sup> See above p. 188 on the unsafe testimony of Pliny too.

<sup>130</sup> E.g. SEG 53. 773, Hermonassa.

<sup>131</sup> Above, p. 160. Another Aphrodite complex used to be imagined there also (Khudyak (1962) 23–30 with Braund (2012) for another cult imagined by the same team), but see Bondarenko (2007) 139. Ourania is nowhere specified in these graffiti: see further below.

<sup>132</sup> Alekseyeva (1994).



as Apatouros she is very much a Bosporan goddess. Evidently, Strabo was impressed by the latter more than the former aspect, perhaps influenced by the local aetiology, rooted in the landscape.

### The Epigraphic Record

It is often claimed that the cult of Aphrodite Ourania was ‘widespread’ in the Bosporus.<sup>133</sup> That is by no means untrue, but we must be clear about what the claim means. It is true and important that we find dedications to Aphrodite Ourania at different locations in the kingdom and that these are spread chronologically across most of its history. However, they are not particularly numerous, even if we accept those added by hypothetical restorations or by uncertain interpretations (notably, CIRB 976 and 1005, discussed below). And they are not particularly widespread in their physical distribution around the kingdom. Nor of course are they at all wide in their focus, which is fixed sharply on the cult at Apatouron, even when the dedications are physically located in the Crimea. We must reckon also with a range of images, especially terracotta figurines, where Ourania has been claimed, but they resist firm identification and will not detain us here.<sup>134</sup>

In fact, we have three certain dedications from Panticapaeum.<sup>135</sup> Up to a further four were found at Phanagoria.<sup>136</sup> At least one was found at Hermonassa,<sup>137</sup> while another at Tsukurskiy Liman has been thought to come from Hermonassa too.<sup>138</sup> And finally, there is supposedly the earliest (and certainly the most troubling), namely the lost dedication which de la Motraye claims to have found between the Sea of Azov and the Kara Kuban, early in the eighteenth century.<sup>139</sup> In total, therefore (if we include this last for the time being), we have ten dedications, each of which we shall examine in some detail, for they will confirm many of our inferences about the nature of Bosporan Ourania and her cult. Overwhelmingly these are dedications of statues, whose inscribed bases have survived. They

<sup>133</sup> Kuznetsov (2006) citing Ustinova (1999) 27.

<sup>134</sup> On these, see Ustinova (1999) 170–1; Bondarenko (2007); Shaub (2007) 325–36; cf. Young and Young (1955) 225.

<sup>135</sup> In chronological order, CIRB 75; 31; 35. Tokhtas’yev (2005) no. 3 (SEG 53. 800) restores CIRB 7 as a fourth, dating from the fourth century BC.

<sup>136</sup> CIRB 971; 972 (where she is Ourania, but Apatouron is not specified); SEG 56. 932; CIRB 1045.

<sup>137</sup> CIRB 1041 with Tokhtas’yev (2002) (= *Bull.Ép.* (2006) no. 305), arguing for more, including a newly published stone of Taman museum from the general area; cf. CIRB 1055 (second century AD). Also Bondarenko (2007) 143.

<sup>138</sup> CIRB 1111.

<sup>139</sup> CIRB 1234.



Figure 14 Aphrodite Ourania riding a swan with Eros

cover a period from perhaps c. 500 BC to AD 243. All come from the Asiatic Bosphorus, except the cluster from Panticapaeum: apart from these, no dedication has been found in the European Bosphorus. It is important, no doubt, that Panticapaeum was the seat of the Bosphoran rulers, who took a close interest in the cult, as we shall see. Meanwhile, in the Asiatic Bosphorus it is interesting and potentially significant that no dedication to Ourania has been found at Cēpi, the one city of the Taman peninsula where we have real knowledge of another cult of Aphrodite besides Ourania, which may well be the cause of her absence there.<sup>140</sup>

From Panticapaeum our earliest extant dedication to the goddess at Apatouron is CIRB 75. This is a tallish, narrow limestone stele of the second half of the second century BC, whose inscription declares that it is a dedication to the goddess ‘on behalf of’ (*huper*) the Bosphoran rulers Paerisades IV,

<sup>140</sup> More generally, we should note also the existence in the Bosphorus of various other small dedications and the like which mention Aphrodite without Ourania: it is not clear how – if at all – they may bear on our concern here. On some of these others, see Ustinova (1999) 32–3, who includes them in her discussion of Ourania; also Kashayev (2016).



Figure 15 Aphrodite Ourania riding a swan: gold pendant found at Elizavetovskoye.  
© V. P. Kopylov, Rostov-on-Don Historical Museum

his mother Kamasarye and her consort Argotos.<sup>141</sup> In addition to its inscription the upper portion of the stone shows Aphrodite flying on a swan<sup>142</sup> with what seems to be a sceptre in her left hand.<sup>143</sup> To the right is a small figure, no doubt of her son, Eros. The image is invaluable, for it is the only certain image of Bosphoran Ourania, beyond the evidence of coinage. It also allows us to identify as Ourania a swan-riding goddess who is shown in terracottas found across the Hellenistic Mediterranean, from Magna Graecia at least to Myrina, though apparently not yet found among the many Bosphoran terracottas.<sup>144</sup> We should note, however, that a swan-riding

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Ustinova (1999) 47–8.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. the swan-riding Ourania of the Pistoxenos Painter (c. 470 BC) with Rosenzweig (2004) 71 and literature there discussed. This swan might, however, be a goose: Villing (2008) and (2017). On broad associations of the swan in art, see also Avronidaki (2015).

<sup>143</sup> Possibly a distaff, not a sceptre (cf. Rosenzweig (2004) 69), but coins regularly show her with a sceptre. On her sceptre in images on Bosphoran jewellery and the like, see Treister (2015) 318.

<sup>144</sup> Ammerman (2002) 350 on these Mediterranean terracottas. Cf. Schauenburg (1996).

goddess had already appeared on a gold pendant found in an otherwise unremarkable dwelling in the settlement of Elizavetovskoye in the Don delta, an artefact dateable around the late fourth or early third century BC. She too is surely Ourania, for stars are also visible on the pendant (they may have featured too on the stone, now very worn). On the pendant too we see her holding a sceptre, while the long neck of the swan (if not mere artistic licence) seems to indicate that she rides a whooper swan.<sup>145</sup> Importantly, it is also rather clearer on the pendant than on the worn stone that Ourania is draped, as on the Bosporan coinage later. The significance of such matronly features of Ourania's iconography in the Bosporus will become evident in what follows. However, it is worth stressing at this point that the more general association of swans with Aphrodite includes a more particular place for the swan in weddings and marriage, in which Ourania seems to have been accorded also a strong role. Accordingly, vase painters thought it appropriate to include swans (sometimes rather incongruously, as it may seem) in the wedding scenes they composed for vases.<sup>146</sup> At the same time, however, it is often unclear, in such images and elsewhere, whether we are being shown a swan or a goose. For recent examinations of these birds tend to suggest that swans and geese not only looked similar, but also shared certain qualities (e.g. colour, fondness for water, etc.).<sup>147</sup> Clearly, the swan (especially the large whooper swan with its elegantly extended neck) was an altogether grander creature, far more appropriate as a steed for the divine. However, the goose was far more easily available in everyday life and also much easier to handle, so that we should not be surprised to find geese preferred to swans in Greek sacrifice. In the Bosporan kingdom, however, there was a periodic surfeit of swans, as they migrated from the north in hard weather, so that they were certainly eaten there, together with a wide range of other water-birds, including the (not obviously tasty) large cormorant.<sup>148</sup> Swans may well have been sacrificed (whether to Aphrodite or to Apollo, who also had a special relationship with swans), but so far we have neither archaeology nor literary evidence to substantiate that possibility in the region.<sup>149</sup> However, there was nothing

<sup>145</sup> Vakhtina (1988); Treister (2015) esp. 321–2, comparing also Bosporan coinage, on which more below.

<sup>146</sup> E.g. Oakley and Sinos (1993) figs. 44 and 105.

<sup>147</sup> See esp. Villing (2017), with interesting observations on what may be swan-geese elision, e.g. on Delos. Cf. also Zografou (2011). It may be important that the goose was generally more common-place, especially in the Mediterranean.

<sup>148</sup> E.g. at Phanagoria and Porthmium, though in small quantity: I am most grateful for this (unpublished) information to E. Dobrovol'skaya and M. Vakhtina, respectively. The fate of these birds remains unclear. For the cormorant, as well as swans, geese and more, see Sablin (2016) 85 on the rural Taman.

<sup>149</sup> Nor in Athens: Reese (1989), discussing the general paucity of bird bones in sacrificial contexts.

un-Greek or un-Ionian in all this, as is sufficiently indicated by the fourth-century BC coins of Clazomenae, which probably celebrated its origins (and at least punned on its name) with the image of the graceful whooper swan on its reverse and the head of Apollo on its obverse. Swans were not rare at Clazomenae, nor across the northern Aegean more widely, while we should bear in mind too that tradition held that Phanagoria was founded from neighbouring Teos, on whose coinage a swan (if it is not a goose) sometimes features. The likelihood that the swan was important here is further suggested by its appearance, again with Apollo, on coins of Leucae, across from Clazomenae.<sup>150</sup>

Meanwhile, we should also observe that on the stone the divine mother and son seem to reproduce the royal mother and son, even if the consort rather disrupts the parallelism. Above are a pair of Nikai<sup>151</sup> and below three garlands, one beneath each of the rulers' names. The inscription states that this stele has been dedicated to the goddess by 'the thiasites', which seems to imply the existence of a thiasos of the goddess, possibly (though not necessarily) in Panticapaeum, where a cult organisation of Apatouran Ourania would be most interesting. However, one might also take an alternative view, for example that this is a thiasos of the goddess in Phanagoria which has chosen to make the dedication in the royal capital for the rulers there. In any event, if this is indeed her thiasos, as seems almost certain, we must take particular note of the iconography and the sense of parenthood that her own followers have seen fit to express in their dedication. For this is not the possibly unorthodox presentation of a particular individual in the Bosphoran elite, but the nearest we can expect to come to an image produced by the very cult itself. If the thiasos was based at Phanagoria (indeed, Apatouron) that becomes even more the case.

The next dedication from Panticapaeum is CIRB 31, a marble plaque which (the CIRB editors suspect) featured in a statue base, and dated around the end of the first century BC. The building in Kerch to which it seems to have been connected has been taken to be a temple of Ourania, which is possible: all depends on this inscription and the apparent grandeur of the building.<sup>152</sup> It declares that Myron, son of Myron, and his wife have

<sup>150</sup> Meadows (2009); cf. Graf (1985). On the swan of Teos' coins, see Braund (2017c).

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Treister (2015) 321.

<sup>152</sup> Bondarenko (2007) 138, accepting the building as Ourania's temple in Kerch, while noting what may be a temple of Aphrodite on the acropolis there. He notes too the large head of Aphrodite found in the city (dated first century AD), while repeating regular (but groundless) old assertions about a five-columned temple of Ourania. Fedoseyev (2016) recovers important detail, including coins and (disappointing) graffiti.

made the dedication 'on behalf of' (*huper*) Queen Dynamis. In Myron we presumably have a member of the Bosporan elite. Towards three centuries later, we have another elite dedication to the goddess from Panticapaeum. This is CIRB 35 (dated AD 243), a limestone base, dedicated to the goddess by a Khrestion who identifies himself as son of Khrestion and grandson of a *prinkips*.<sup>153</sup> He explains that his dedication was consequent upon a prayer, which was evidently answered.<sup>154</sup> Three dedications in all, therefore: this is not a great haul from the European Bosporus. And the earliest dedication is notably late, towards the end of the Spartocids' rule. Two of the three dedications from the royal capital concern its rulers, while the third, significantly later, indicates a link to the royal administration. However, none is a dedication made by a ruler. In all three cases the dedication reaches across to the other side of the straits, for the recipient goddess is specified as Aphrodite Ourania 'mistress of Apatouron'.

In the Asiatic Bosporus, the (potentially) earliest dedication is certainly the most awkward for us, largely because the stone has long been lost.<sup>155</sup> Our knowledge of it depends upon the drawing of a relief and accompanying inscription made by a French traveller of the early eighteenth century, A. de la Motraye, where we may forgive a certain contemporary style. However, the outrageous antics of some of his contemporaries, including blatant inventions, must make us at least cautious about this unparalleled monument.<sup>156</sup> Closer examination of this particular 'discovery' confirms that there is a serious problem. The drawing of the relief shows a scene of deities that is far more complex than any other images available for the goddess. There we see a semi-nude Aphrodite, who does not resemble in any way the swan-rider or the veiled and draped lady of the coins. Quite apart from her comparative nudity, there is no sign of the sceptre that features in coin images and in the swan-rider scene. She appears with a male (often taken to be Hermes, unwarrantedly)<sup>157</sup> in the centre of a standing group. To the left of the composition stands Poseidon, with a large trident, and to the right the boy Eros and a bearded figure of mature years, who wears a garlanded *pilos*. His head and *pilos* may remind us of the heads on

<sup>153</sup> A poorly understood position of importance in the Bosporan administration: cf. CIRB 744; 811.

<sup>154</sup> If *euxamenos* is the correct restoration, as seems most likely.

<sup>155</sup> CIRB 1234, with commentary on its find spot.

<sup>156</sup> Stoneman (1985) demonstrates this behaviour among Motraye's contemporaries.

<sup>157</sup> A mysterious interaction of Hermes and Aphrodite, probably with initiatory function, is known from Kato Smirni in southern Crete: Parker (2011) 235; cf. Pironti (2007) 193–4. We may wonder whether they lie behind the name of Hermonassa ('Hermes' lady?'), or at least were thought to do so in antiquity.



Phanagoritan coinage, so that his identification is a priority.<sup>158</sup> Heracles has been suggested, since he is so central to the myth at Apatouron, but one might have wished for a club, lion skin or other distinguishing feature of Heracles.<sup>159</sup> In fact, he must be Hephaestus: the tongs he holds are typical of the iconography of the smith-god, who was also Aphrodite's husband.<sup>160</sup> The semi-nude Aphrodite is the centre of attention as the other figures all gaze at her. Her male companion is not Hermes. For the presence of Hephaestus and Poseidon show that he must be Ares, who was Aphrodite's lover. Eros is familiar with Aphrodite, but the presence of Poseidon injects narrative into the static scene. For in the canonical version of the adultery of Aphrodite and Ares, namely the song of Demodocus in the *Odyssey* (8. 266–369), it is Poseidon who brings closure to the story by standing as guarantor for the compensation that the reluctant Ares must pay to the outraged Hephaestus. Poseidon's presence in the scene thus implies the whole narrative of Hephaestus' imprisonment of the adulterous couple and the mockery of the other gods until Poseidon enforces an end to the matter.<sup>161</sup>

Such a scene as this was wholly inappropriate for a dedication to Aphrodite Ourania, whose concerns were marriage and ordered reproduction. Her identification as Ourania depends entirely upon mention of Apatouron in the accompanying 'inscription' in broken Greek, which de la Motraye also draws for us.<sup>162</sup> It makes no sense, but sports letters which look archaic in form. The drawing suggests also missing letters and other letters which have often been thought to be mistaken readings from the stone. All in all we can only conclude that the inscription is bogus, while the image itself may well correspond to an actual ancient object, for it makes sense in a way that the Greek does not. It seems most likely that the travelling *savant* knew of the Apatouron cult and concocted a kind of inscription to connect it with an actual discovery, whose nature remains obscure.<sup>163</sup> We may observe the absence from this bogus text of any mention of Ourania, who was also omitted by Strabo, de la Motraye's

<sup>158</sup> On these heads, Braund (2012).

<sup>159</sup> Phanagoras, civic founder of Phanagoria, might also be considered, especially if his is the head that appears on the coins of Phanagoria: further, Hind (2008); Braund (2012).

<sup>160</sup> Further, LIMC *s.v.* Hephaestus. I am very grateful to Olga Palagia for drawing my attention to the significance of these tongs.

<sup>161</sup> On the themes involved, see e.g. Alden (1997).

<sup>162</sup> Minns (1913) follows Tolstoy in creating a text, while CIRB 1234 stays closer to Motraye's notes, giving a result that is still less likely.

<sup>163</sup> The image might suit a Roman imperial sarcophagus (O. Palagia *pers. comm.*). The Myrmecium sarcophagus would be a plausible parallel: see p. 47.

probable source, directly or indirectly. We must set aside this unhelpful confection, which is all the more regrettable because this seemed to be our earliest dedication to the goddess.<sup>164</sup> However, there is also a residual benefit. For it seems to follow that the *pilos*-wearing head on the coins of Phanagoria, which has caused so much difficulty in identification, should be understood as Hephaestus, who was at home in this volcanic area.<sup>165</sup> Presumably, he had a relevance at Apatouron, but there is no sign of him there in any of our evidence.

From Phanagoria, we have CIRB 971, a marble statue base of the second half of the fourth century BC, dedicated to the goddess by an Apollodorus, without any clue as to the cause or purpose of his act. I have noted elsewhere, however, the potentially important fact that he gives the name of his father as Phanagoros: this unparalleled sporting of the name of the civic founder (and the expense of the dedication) suggests that Apollodorus was a member of the Bosporan elite who even claimed descent from the founder.<sup>166</sup> Also discovered on the Taman peninsula was CIRB IIII, usually dated to the first half of the fourth century BC, a dedication to the goddess by a Demarkhos, son of Skythes. This is a double herm in marble, very badly worn. It may have shown the faces of Aphrodite and Eros.<sup>167</sup> Its find spot, according to the farmer involved, was a tumulus on the western shore of Tsikurskiy Liman, to the south of Hermonassa. However, its form is probably its most interesting feature, for we should recall Pausanias' statement about a herm-like image of Aphrodite Ourania near the temple of Aphrodite 'in the Gardens'. It too was inscribed: Pausanias states that its inscription declared Aphrodite Ourania to be the oldest of the Fates.<sup>168</sup>

Recently pulled from the waters off Phanagoria, we also have SEG 56.932, a marble statue base which is the earliest of two dedications made to the goddess by Bosporan rulers themselves, in addition to those dedications that involved rulers in other ways:

King Aspurgus, philorhomaeus, son of King Asandrokhos (dedicates) Eros to Aphrodite Ourania, mistress of Apatouron, as a thank-offering.

Evidently, the base bore a statue of Aphrodite's son Eros, whom we saw already depicted on CIRB 75. Regularly located in her presence, Eros is not rare as a dedication to his mother.<sup>169</sup> However, it is at least worth

<sup>164</sup> See esp. Alexandrescu Vianu (1997) 24–6.

<sup>165</sup> See above p. 205 on Giants.

<sup>166</sup> Braund (2012).

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Ustinova (1999) 33. On Aphrodite Ourania and herms, see Gaifman (2012) 67.

<sup>168</sup> Paus. 1. 19. 2, with Rosenzweig (2004) 73; Pironti (2007) 85–8.

<sup>169</sup> Breitenberger (2007); cf. Buckler (1936).



noticing that King Aspurgus not only dedicates to the goddess a statue of her son, but also expresses his own identity as son of Asandrokhos, more familiar as King Asander. The details are suggestive. For, while it was usual for Bosporan kings to give their filiation, the inclusion of the Greek word for son (*huios*) was not common, necessary or normal,<sup>170</sup> and so the inclusion of the word here may be meaningful. Accordingly, there is some reason to suspect that the choice of Eros is part of a concern with parenthood. Conceivably, the king had produced a son and wished to thank the goddess by dedicating a statue of her son. However, we may observe too the gratitude he expressed in another inscription to the people of Gorgippia on his return from Rome, where he had ensured Roman approval for his succession as Tiberius had himself succeeded Augustus in AD 14.<sup>171</sup> Aspurgus may have thanked the goddess not for a son, but for his safe and successful return from the long and trying journey, especially as he probably travelled some of the way by sea. On that scenario his filiation was especially relevant too, for it expressed his claim to the throne as the son of Asander. It has recently been argued that the simplicity of the royal titlature here suggests a date early in his reign. If that is right, it would suit this latter possibility.<sup>172</sup>

The other royal dedication to the goddess was made by the Bosporan king Sauromates I. It is dated to AD 105 and was apparently carried out by his administrator in sacred matters (*ho epi hierōn*: CIRB 1045). This dedication is remarkable in that it breaks the rule of all the other inscribed dedications. While the others consistently name the goddess as 'Aphrodite Ourania, mistress of Apatouron', in this single instance we have a form which approaches the adjectival usage of Strabo and the other adjectives indicated also by Stephanus. However, although these usages were several, Sauromates' adjective is different again: the goddess is Aphrodite *Apatourias*. There is no parallel for the form *Apatourias* (here in the dative), though Pausanias 2. 33 is regularly cited as such – in error, for she is Athena Apatouria.<sup>173</sup> Unfortunately, the stone is quite badly damaged and much of the text is lost. However, its gist is clear enough: the king has had stoas and perhaps related structures renewed thoroughly: it seems to be these that he dedicates to the goddess, while also erecting a statue on whose marble base the inscription survives. Crucially, the most likely context for a dedication

<sup>170</sup> A genitive would suffice, though it must be allowed that *huios* does occur elsewhere in royal Bosporan texts.

<sup>171</sup> Heinen (1999).

<sup>172</sup> Kuznetsov (2006) esp. 161.

<sup>173</sup> It seems he only has *Apatourias* because he intends the genitive form of the epithet Apatouria.

of stoas to her is at her own sanctuary. Accordingly, we may suspect that we have here a monument which stood in a sanctuary of the goddess, most obviously in the sanctuary at Apatouron itself. For, while in principle it remains possible that stoas might be dedicated to Aphrodite of Apatouron at some other location, it seems much more likely that these were part of her sanctuary there. Its find spot might therefore have directed us to the site of Apatouron, but unfortunately it was found in the courtyard of a church in Taman (ancient Hermonassa), where several other ancient artefacts had been gathered.<sup>174</sup> Meanwhile, the king's idiosyncratic designation of the goddess would also be more comprehensible if the inscription were intended for Apatouron, where the normal formula would be cumbersome and otiose. A plausible restoration on what may be a further dedication suggests that Sauromates I (or possibly II) used the normal formula elsewhere.<sup>175</sup>

Another dedication may well also come from Apatouron itself. This is a statue base found in Phanagoria. In the reign of Paerisades I a woman named Kassalia dedicated the statue simply to Aphrodite Ourania without mention of Apatouron. Her failure to specify the locus of the goddess in the usual way need not be meaningful, but it might well be a consequence of the dedication's location in the sanctuary of Apatouron (CIRB 972). After all we may be sure enough that there were many statues and other dedications made at the sanctuary itself, and this and Sauromates' may well be examples of such. On this stone the editors of CIRB observe that it was discovered with a clutch of other dedications to various deities in the same part of Phanagoria. That is of some interest, but it does not advance our study of Apatouron much, given the movement of stones in the Taman peninsula. Certainly, it is possible that a religious centre lay nearby, perhaps even Apatouron, but it is also possible that the stones were gathered there from elsewhere. It is important to remember that stone is rare on the Taman peninsula, so that old stones have commonly been transported over distances for reuse, not least for the construction works of the Russian military in the late eighteenth century. No less problematic is CIRB 1041, which is too fragmentary to show us Aphrodite's titles, if any. However, the fact that the dedicant seems to be related to Paerisades would fit well

<sup>174</sup> The CIRB editors provide detailed bibliography. Note that the remains at Taman used to be thought those of Phanagoria, but that opinion has long since been abandoned, for example because of the still more extensive remains at the site near Sennaya (now Sennoy), where Phanagoria is located by general agreement.

<sup>175</sup> Tokhtas'yev (2002) (*Bull.Ép.* (2006) no. 305).

enough with a dedication to the goddess at Apatouron. Its find spot (at Hermonassa) also cannot be pressed.

These inscriptions are all the more impressive when we bear in mind that they are often cut on the bases of statues, with all the expense and visual impact that statues imply. These statues help to explain and confirm Strabo's contention that the *hieron* was notable, for we may be sure enough that it was well set out with statues, stoas and other fine features. The repeated royal involvement, direct and indirect, also supports this sense of its success, prosperity and centrality within the culture of the kingdom. The dereliction mentioned under Sauromates I might refer to structural failure, as the CIRB editors seem to think, possibly through earthquake.<sup>176</sup> However, decline at Apatouron may well illustrate a quite different phenomenon, namely the unrest around the northeastern Black Sea at least from the death of Cotys I, which was roughly contemporary with the death of the emperor Nero in AD 68. Tacitus happens to tell us about the rampages of a piratical fleet under a certain Anicetus in AD 69, but the problem must have been greater still. For Pliny describes Apatouron as 'almost deserted' in his *Natural History* of AD 77.<sup>177</sup> The Taman peninsula had a history of unrest: Polemo I had lost his life there. It seems that the reign of Cotys I's successor, Rhescuporis I, was a testing time for the Bosphoran king, which would account for the martial iconography of his coinage and give an explanatory context for the dereliction that Sauromates I put right. The sanctuary must have been a fine prize for the raider or revolutionary. As we saw with the Artemision at Ephesus, such places were not only holders of great wealth of all kinds, but were also more particularly depositories for money and all manner of treasure that might be seized. We can only speculate on the extent to which the cult-centre at Apatouron benefited from, and perhaps engaged actively with, the trade that Strabo mentions around Phanagoria, as well as the movement of goods in and out of the Sea of Azov and across the waters of the straits with the Crimea. Clearly, however, there was much to tempt the acquisitive at Apatouron, who knew or cared little about the punishment that Ourania had delivered upon the Scythians who had looted her temple at Ascalon. Elsewhere around the Black Sea, Strabo himself (II. 2. 17) is moved to quote Euripides on such sacrilegious looting in unsettled times.

<sup>176</sup> See e.g. Phlegon of Tralles *De mir.* 19. 1, attributing a story of violent Bosphoran earthquake to Theopompus of Sinope (FGrH 115): cf. Saprykin (1997); Mayor (2011) 146.

<sup>177</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3. 47=8; Pliny, *NH* 6. 18.

Finally, we should be clear that there is more than a little randomness in the inscriptions we have for Aphrodite Ourania in the Bosphorus. Each stone has had its own peculiar history from the time it was cut to the moment of its discovery, and indeed thereafter. Accordingly, we are in no good position to devise arguments from silence. And we may be very sure that more inscriptions will be found. Very recent years have seen the discovery of an ostrakon at Artezian in the eastern Crimea, which might have a bearing on our goddess, while we now at last have a dedication from Tanais, which almost certainly entails her. These additions, as well as the important block brought from the sea at Phanagoria, illustrate how quickly a new find or two can provide an important new dimension to our thinking.<sup>178</sup>

### Deceitful Aphrodite and the Bosphoran Apatouria

The Bosphorans clearly took the deceit of Aphrodite – her *apatē* – to account for not only her local title *Apatouros* (alias *Apatourias*), but also the name of her great sanctuary at Apatouron. Dubious etymology, of course, but much more than that is at stake here, for we have seen that deceit was among her special weapons. After all, deceit might play a large part in sex and reproduction.<sup>179</sup> At the same time, however, we should appreciate that deceit was also generally recognised as a military tactic and talent, as Polyaeus' large collection of improbable ruses demonstrates well enough.<sup>180</sup> Accordingly, deceit was not only a matter of Aphrodite's feminine wiles, but also part of the goddess's militant armoury, a path to victory over the Giants. Not only the end, but also the means were laudable in this and many another case of deception. That is important, because it helps us to understand how such trickery can occupy so central a place in the goddess's nature and identity, especially at Apatouron, while we see too the potential of deception in all manner of other rituals that may or may not be connected with her.

For the association between *apatē* and Aphrodite was certainly not limited to the Bosphorus or to Apatouron. Already in the *Homeric hymn to Aphrodite* we see how *apatē* is key to Aphrodite's power over gods, humans and the natural world. Again, in Hesiod's *Theogony* *apatē* is duly listed among the powers of the goddess. In Homer too she is closely involved in

<sup>178</sup> For the ostrakon, see n. 198. The dedication to her (almost certainly as mistress of Apatouron) is important because it comes from Hellenistic Tanais, though only the letters OYPOY have survived clearly: further, Ivantchik and Tokhtas'yev (2017).

<sup>179</sup> Further, e.g. Parker (2005) 432–3.

<sup>180</sup> Brodersen (2010); cf. Krentz (2000); Hesk (2001).

the most famous features of erotic *apatē*, whether Hera's deceptive distraction of Zeus by the deployment of her sexuality in *Iliad* 14, or Penelope's deception of the suitors through her tapestry in the *Odyssey*. With these key features of archaic Greek culture in mind, we can better understand that the Bosporans who created the tale of Aphrodite and the Giants were not the authors of some fantastical concoction outside the realms of Ionian norms. In consequence, there is no need for speculation about Scythian creativity at work here. Rather the Bosporans created a story about the goddess which had her deploy locally one of her most famous and effective powers, in full accordance with Greek notions elsewhere. Indeed, Penelope's ruse is particularly comparable, for she used *apatē* to counter the sexual desire of the pack of suitors so that a waiting third party (Odysseus, eventually) could kill them, very much as in the Bosporan story Aphrodite manipulates the Giants to their deaths at the hands of Heracles. Given Ourania's concern with marriage in particular, the ruse of Penelope resembles the Bosporan myth particularly closely. Meanwhile, in marked contrast with Penelope's long-sustained fidelity in marriage, we have Herodotus' story of the Scythian wives who had sex and children with their slaves during the absence of their men, which may suggest some antithesis between Bosporans and Scythians with regard to Apatouron (Hdt. 4. 3).

Deception was also of substantial importance in stories about the origins of the Apatouria festival at Athens and elsewhere. A version of the festival must have been celebrated in the Bosphorus, since Herodotus makes it clear that the festival was common to all Ionians, with the exception of Ephesus and Colophon.<sup>181</sup> We need not imagine that Herodotus considered the Bosporans, but they claimed strong Ionian roots through Miletus in particular,<sup>182</sup> so that the reluctance of most modern scholars to accept the reality of the Bosporan Apatouria is hard to understand.<sup>183</sup> We should not be misled by the fact that the kingdom did not have a month that bore the name of the festival, as did some other Ionian communities. For the same may be said of Athens.<sup>184</sup> In general, the festival centred upon the registration of children as legitimate, and on the charting of their progression into adulthood, marriage and so reproduction in turn. That was handled at a very local level, among kinship groups or *phratries*, which helps to

<sup>181</sup> Hdt. 1. 147, with important remarks by Connor (1993).

<sup>182</sup> Note Cittus' (alleged) decision to claim to be a Milesian to achieve his ends in Panticapaeum in the early fourth century BC: Isoc. 17. 51.

<sup>183</sup> An exception is Gaidukevich (1971) 266; cf. also Koshelenko (2010).

<sup>184</sup> As noted by Connor (1993) 195.

explain both our relative ignorance about proceedings and the apparent variety in practice from place to place, even within communities. We have no idea, therefore, how the festival proceeded among the Bosporans, or among many other Ionians either. However, the same core concerns surely applied: in the kinship groups fathers presented their sons (and probably daughters) and husbands their wives, all in the context of celebrations that extended over three days or so.

As ever, we know more about its celebration in Athens than anywhere else.<sup>185</sup> Uncertainty is rife here too,<sup>186</sup> but we have glimpses of a festival that was localised and fragmented within the community from kinship group to kinship group.<sup>187</sup> The very local nature of practice helps to account for the flurry of inconsistent information in the evidence on the festival, even about matters as important as the identities of the gods involved, the participation of females, the animals sacrificed and more besides. It seems too that there were quite a lot of different processes in train during the festival, and at different stages of the child's life. The Athenian evidence confirms that there were major local idiosyncrasies. At Athens, for example, there was a local myth about deceitful killing which was set at the frontier with Boeotia. Clearly, that was not a myth likely to apply elsewhere among Ionians, where the Boeotian frontier had little purchase. Indeed, it remains unclear just how important that myth was even in Attica, as scholars have reacted to the intense attention formerly given to the story. Certainly, we may doubt whether this tale of the Boeotian frontier had great purchase around even Attic locales far from Boeotia, as at Sunium, for example.<sup>188</sup> Meanwhile, we should bear in mind also the evocative contribution of Critias at the beginning of Plato's *Timaeus*,<sup>189</sup> where we glimpse in the course of the Athenian Apatouria not only formalised group singing and readings of verse, but also casual conversation between the generations about culture, politics and values.<sup>190</sup> All rather whimsical, perhaps, but

<sup>185</sup> Cole (1984) 233; Parker (2005) 458–61; (2011) 203.

<sup>186</sup> Palagia (1995) 497 gives a valuable sketch of problems concerning the Athenian version of the festival, with ancient and modern authorities. Cf. Beaumont (2012) 68–9. Shapiro (2003) observes the curious absence of the festival from most, if not all, Athenian vases.

<sup>187</sup> So much emerges from a properly cautious survey of evidence for hair-cutting at the Apatouria: Leitao (2003) esp. 116. More generally, Humphreys (2004) 132; Lambert (1993).

<sup>188</sup> The duel of Xanthus and Melanthus: the latter killed the former by causing him (by deception) to look back and leave himself open to the blow that killed him, so enforcing Athenian territorial claims. Further, Fowler (1996) 79 with references; cf. Parker (2005) 461 on Hellanicus, FGrH 323a F23; Ma (1994); Humphreys (2004) 228.

<sup>189</sup> *Timaeus* 21a–c, with important explication by Lambert (2008) 25.

<sup>190</sup> In this case between the 90-year-old grandfather (also Critias) and the speaker, then aged 10.

such a picture was clearly credible to Athenians who had personal experience of the festival. The scene further illustrates two important features of the Apatouria, where there was clearly a lot going on across its three days of celebration. The first is the strong focus on children (where we see most about boys), and the second is the strong local flavour: the whole account is profoundly Athenian, with Athena and Solon to the fore.<sup>191</sup> That sense of Athenianness was key to the Apatouria at Athens, so that Aristophanes, for example, could make comic use of the festival in order to exploit the absurdity of the award of Athenian citizenship to the son of the Thracian king Sitalces – as if the deceitful boy belonged in this festival of deceit, perhaps.<sup>192</sup> In Athens, too, the obvious (if false) etymology concerning *apatē* was never far away, though there was an alternative etymology in terms of shared paternity. This alternative has come into vogue among some scholars, but it is strikingly uncommon in antiquity (we depend on the Suda) and it is, in any case, hardly more plausible as an etymology than the more common appeal to *apatē*.<sup>193</sup> As with the other etymological issues surrounding Aphrodite in the Bosphorus, the most important point is that Bosporan society evidently (as Strabo indicates) supported the version that appears in our sources, and that this version clearly made sense to local participants in regard to her cult, its celebrations and its broad social, political and economic significance. That is far more important than whether we may consider one etymology to be better or worse than another in terms of its linguistic accuracy. At the same time, of course, any sense that locals may have had about an etymology in terms of shared paternity (of which there is no sign in the Bosphorus) would similarly support the broader function of cohesion served by the Apatouria and the cult more generally.

While boys recur prominently in our evidence for the Apatouria, we hear much less of girls. However, they too required registration and were surely included, as we are told.<sup>194</sup> Another of the several problems with the Athenian story at the Boeotian frontier is that it entails trickery in combat between two youths. It gave no obvious scope for girls. However, there were stories of deceit for them too and in regard to the Apatouria.

<sup>191</sup> On Athena here, see Garvey (2008).

<sup>192</sup> *Ar. Acharnians* 146, with scholia ad loc.

<sup>193</sup> Only preserved in Suda *s.v.* Apatouria, where it is presented as a second option. It is more to the modern taste, sometimes given as fact: e.g. Mikalson (2005) 154. Note too that the Suda entry shows no concern for the Apatouria outside Athens, and may imply significant differences between local celebrations of the festival.

<sup>194</sup> Suda *s.v.* Apatouria.

A tradition from Troezen is particularly suggestive.<sup>195</sup> And it also takes us back to the Athenian tradition about King Aegeus' childlessness, with which this chapter began. For at Troezen we hear a little of Athena Apatouria.<sup>196</sup> This is an aetiological myth about the creation of the cult of Athena Apatouria on an island off Troezen, at which thereafter women about to marry dedicated their 'girdles'.<sup>197</sup> The link between this Apatouria and marriage could hardly be clearer, while the myth again centres upon deceit. For it tells of the *apatē* of Athena when she sent a misleading dream to lure Aethra to the island where Poseidon pounced and had sex with her. The resulting child was Theseus, who grew up as the son of Aethra and Aegeus. We should recall that this was the very Aegeus who established the cult of Aphrodite Ourania in Athens, according to Pausanias (I. 14. 7), with a view to having offspring after his earlier childlessness.

Gradually a broad sense of the Bosporan Apatouria begins to emerge, despite the lack of any direct evidence about it.<sup>198</sup> Aphrodite Ourania surely played a key role in the Bosporan version of the festival, as she may have done also at Olbia.<sup>199</sup> She shares in the mythology (and etymology) of deceit that runs through the festival at Athens and Troezen. She is Aphrodite Apatouros (alias Apatourias), close to Athena Apatouria of Troezen. And she has a major concern with marriage and ordered reproduction that is illustrated not only across Greek culture in general, but in Bosporan dedications and even on the brink of the Athenian version of the festival, as we have seen with King Aegeus. In Athens, clearly, it was the goddess of the city – Athena – who presided over the Apatouria, with Zeus Phratrios. It is entirely appropriate therefore to suppose that Aphrodite Ourania of Apatouron presided over the Bosporan version of the festival insofar as she was the great female deity of the kingdom. Moreover, it may well be more than coincidence that both goddesses were celebrated too for their vanquishing of Giants, each in their own community. For it was entirely consistent with the concerns of the Apatouria (legitimacy, order and the like) that the patron goddess of the festival should overcome the Giants, with their propensity to rape and riot.

<sup>195</sup> Cook (2006) 183–5.

<sup>196</sup> Paus. 2. 33. 1, not Aphrodite Apatourias, *contra* Greaves (2004) 30 n. 2 and others.

<sup>197</sup> Further, Schmitt (1977).

<sup>198</sup> A recently discovered ostrakon from Artezian in the interior of the Crimean Bosporus (first century AD?) might link a child to the goddess and so her festival. It is taken to be the work of a child, and shows the word ... *latouros*, which is not unreasonably taken to be Apatouros and to indicate the deity: Saprykin, Vinokurov and Belousov (2014). However, these are large assumptions.

<sup>199</sup> See Alexandrescu Vianu (1997) 26 on Olbian evidence that may indicate an Apatourian Aphrodite, who is unlikely to be linked directly to the Bosporan cult.



While the principal male counterpart of Athena at Athens was apparently Zeus (indeed, Zeus Phratrios), it is clear that other male deities were also involved in the festival there. It is particularly interesting to see Hephaestus and Heracles<sup>200</sup> in prominent roles. The former received sacrifice during the festival, according to Istros, from youths singing hymns, who were dressed in their finest clothes and bore burning torches.<sup>201</sup> Evidently, we should envisage not a torch-race, such as occurred at the Panathenaea and other festivals, but a more stately procession. Istros seems to have imagined that the rite commemorated Hephaestus' bestowal of fire upon the Athenians in particular, presumably part of the claim of Athens to be the ancient mother of the Ionians.<sup>202</sup> Meanwhile, the youth about to cut their hair held a wine ritual for Heracles which involved libation and shared consumption.<sup>203</sup> After all he married Youth herself.<sup>204</sup> Of course, both may have featured in Bosporan celebrations of the Apatouria, for both were important in and around Apatouron. In particular, Heracles' role in the deceit-myth of Apatouron encourages the suspicion that he may have partnered Ourania in those celebrations, rather as Zeus partnered Athena at Athens. If so, that would better explain Heracles' inclusion within the Apatouron myth. But quite how the Apatouria worked in the Bosphorus remains a matter of speculation, as do the phratries which presumably existed there, but are nowhere attested. By contrast with democratic Athens, the Bosphorus was of course a monarchy, so that we might suspect a more centralising approach to the festival there, but we simply do not know.<sup>205</sup> There may well be merit, however, in the suggestion that the colonies of the Bosphorus were already tending to unite around the key cult at Apatouron in archaic times, well before the Spartocids. On that view the monarchy would be as much an effect of Bosporan coalescence as its cause.<sup>206</sup> If we are right, as we surely must be, that Apatouran Aphrodite was the key deity in the Bosporan Apatouria, it would seem to follow that her Apatouria was an important focus for that coalescence.

<sup>200</sup> Lawton (2007) esp. 57–8 on a relief in Venice.

<sup>201</sup> In the first book of his *Atthis*, according to Harpocration s.v. Lampas.

<sup>202</sup> E.g. Connor (1993). Istros wrote in later third-century-BC Alexandria. Bookidis (2003) 271 n. 124 highlights the weakness of claims that a race was involved, which are the product of textual emendation.

<sup>203</sup> Hesychius s.v. Oinisteria; cf. Athenaeus II. 494f (Pamphilus). Note also Eupolis, fr. 146 KA.

<sup>204</sup> Hebe: further, Parker (2005) 437–9.

<sup>205</sup> Bondarenko (2007) 137 collects various speculations about Spartocid political use of Ourania.

<sup>206</sup> The view of Kuznetsov (2014), also wondering how the cult's foundation related to the creation of Phanagoria.

We should note too that Aphrodite is also attested with regard to the Apatouria in Ionian phratries, where she features among the recipients of offerings prior to marriage.<sup>207</sup> Especially interesting in that regard is a treasure-box from Athens. It is a very substantial stone artefact, on which Aphrodite Ourania is mentioned by name in an inscription cut about 400 BC or a little later. The inscription reads, 'Treasure-box for first-fruits – the one for Aphrodite Ourania: pre-marital offering (*proteleia*), one drachma'.<sup>208</sup> The central role of the goddess in successful and fruitful marriage made her an obvious choice for such offerings, especially in Athens where we have observed her cult's origin in the myth of Aegeus' childlessness.<sup>209</sup>

In view of these indications about the Apatouria and related matters outside the Bosphorus, albeit few and sparse enough, it is surely impossible to avoid the inference that in the Bosphorus there was not only an Apatouria festival, as elsewhere among Ionians, but also that Aphrodite Ourania, mistress at Apatouron, was key to it. Clearly enough, the myth of her cult at Apatouron was a local phenomenon, as evidently were other aetiological myths in the various Ionian communities (Athens included). The origins of her cult, like the origins of the Bosporean Apatouria, remain well beyond our knowledge. As far as we know, it was not simply imported from Teos or Miletus or even Mytilene, which is the best argument (albeit from silence) for some non-Greek contribution to its creation. And yet we cannot claim to know anything of substance about the religious activities of phratries on archaic Teos, for example. As to the functioning of the Bosporean Apatouria, we are again in the dark, but there is no reason why Ourania and Heracles there could not have played the presiding roles in the Apatouria that are attested at Athens especially for Athena and Zeus. In fact, Ourania's particular concern with marriage and legitimate reproduction seem to suit such a role very well.

The Bosporean inscriptions concerning Aphrodite Ourania lend support to such arguments, for we have seen how the theme of parentage recurs in several of the extant dedications. We saw that CIRB 75 entails both the ruling family of the Bosphorus and the family of Aphrodite, with the king and his mother balanced by Eros and his mother Aphrodite. Here the thiasites (of the goddess?) not only make explicit family relationships that must have been well known at the time, but also apply epithets to reinforce that sense of family, so that the king is *philometor* and his

<sup>207</sup> Parker (2005) 440, also observing potentially relevant iconography.

<sup>208</sup> SEG 41. 182; 57. 198; Pirenne-Delforge (2007) 315–16.

<sup>209</sup> Further, Parker (2005) 440–1; Jim (2014) esp. 255 (on 'first fruits' here).

mother is *philoteknos*. The fact that these epithets were not used in the record of Paerisades' and Kamasarye's dedications to Apollo at Didyma confirms their particular significance and relevance to Aphrodite Ourania in the Bosphorus. Although other explanations might be sought, we may well suppose that it was precisely the emphasis on family and parentage (and still more specifically the mother–son bond) in the cult of Bosporan Ourania that caused these epithets to be inscribed.<sup>210</sup>

The concern with family persists beyond the routine in other Bosporan dedications to Ourania too. There is more than routine filiation in CIRB 35, the latest extant dedication to the mistress of Apatouron, after which the kingdom would soon be torn apart again, beyond recovery (Zosimus I. 31). The inscription is rather unusual in giving also a grandfather, though that might be explained simply by the grandeur of his stated office. However, the new dedication by King Aspurgus (SEG 56. 932) is especially important because it shows a clear concern with parentage that is again beyond the routine. Throughout, these dedications seek to connect not with the founding myth of the cult at Apatouron, but with the religious and social significance of the cult as practised there. We have seen that Heracles might have some role in Apatourian activities, but the cult was clearly focused on Aphrodite and her son, Eros, and therefore we may suspect that their mother–son relationship was central to Apatourian celebrations in the kingdom as well. Again, however, we must be clear that even Eros is in the background: it is his mother Aphrodite Ourania who receives the various dedications, not him and certainly not Heracles. The only sign of Ourania's consort is in the dedication to Sanerges and Astara, which may well come from Apatouron and very probably entails Ourania (as Astara-Astarte), but there the Bosporan queen has deliberately formulated her dedication in terms that are distinct from the regular Greek cult of Ourania and concern instead, explicitly, deities of the non-Greek east.<sup>211</sup> She will have had a reason for that, but we do not know it. Finally, there is CIRB 971, where we have noted the possibility that this is the family of the civic founder of Phanagoria itself. In this case there is no stated explanation of the cause of the dedication. However, since Ourania was taken to pre-date Greek settlement in the region, as her cult-myth shows, and since she must therefore have been thought to have sanctioned the establishment and growth of cities there, we may well appreciate how

<sup>210</sup> I. Didyma 463–4. The epithets do not appear either in CIRB 1015; cf. SEG 45. 1016.

<sup>211</sup> Alexandrescu Vianu (1997) 27, with much speculation, including the extraordinary claim that the Crimean Parthenos is a form of Aphrodite.

the family of the oikist of Phanagoria could have claimed and been allowed a special relationship with the deity under whose tutelage the foundation had prospered and grown.

Meanwhile, in considering the dedications, the nature of the dedicants repays closer attention, too. Royal involvement is striking. We have seen the dedication to the goddess *on behalf of* the royal family of Paerisades IV (CIRB 75). Similarly, CIRB 31 is another dedication, by a husband and wife, *on behalf of* royalty, namely Queen Dynamis.<sup>212</sup> And, still more strikingly, King Aspurgus' own dedication (SEG 56. 932) and Sauromates I's dedicatory building inscription there in AD 105 (CIRB 1045) together demonstrate Bosphoran rulers' concern with the cult. More generally, we may also notice the particular involvement of women among the dedicants, either alone or with a husband. Taken together these dedications flesh out Strabo's sketch of a notable cult and cult-centre in the Asiatic Bosphorus. The involvement of men and women, royalty and commoners (albeit wealthy ones), contributes to our picture of a cult which was inclusive, at least among the powerful of the kingdom, who clearly took a special interest in it.

### Coinage, Wealth, Ritual

Consideration of Bosphoran coinage further develops that picture in several ways. The kingdom produced a lot of coinage, in precious metal and bronze. While the rulers themselves and the Roman emperors dominate the former coinage, Aphrodite Ourania was important on the bronze, the coinage in most everyday use across the kingdom. For we see the goddess on Bosphoran bronze coinage through much of the Roman period, chosen by or for a series of Bosphoran rulers. That choice confirms what the dedications had already shown, namely the overwhelming significance of her cult in the kingdom, including also sustained royal involvement with it. Her iconography on this coinage is quite consistent across some three centuries under Rome. Earlier preference for a head or bust under the Julio-Claudians was soon replaced by a regular image of the goddess seated. She is modestly maternal, while at the same time exuding also a sense of power and authority, as indicated by the prominent sceptre she holds. As if to convey her linkage with the rulers of the kingdom, she tends to occupy the reverses of coins which show the ruler's head on the obverse. She first appears in Bosphoran coinage, as

<sup>212</sup> On the formula 'on behalf of', see Price (1984).

far as we know, on the obverse of bronze coins issued under Augustus, which proclaim the new names of Panticapaeum and Phanagoria, that is Caesarea and Agrippaia, named after the emperor and M. Agrippa respectively.<sup>213</sup> The new names of these principal cities of the kingdom (albeit fleeting) justifies the modern claim that they made the entrance to Maeotis a kind of monument to the Augustan regime.<sup>214</sup> There we have her head, veiled and, on what seem to be coins from Panticapaeum-Caesarea, wearing a calathus too, representing traditional female virtue. Some four or five decades later the veiled head, again with calathus, reappears in rather different style on the reverse of bronze coins of Queen Gepaepyris, issued c. AD 37. The queen herself appears on the obverse.<sup>215</sup> Of course, we cannot know quite why the queen had Ourania on her coins, but it may have been important that she owed her throne to her marriage with Aspurgus, by now apparently dead. Meanwhile, we should also note the implications of the fact that, beyond an occasional star,<sup>216</sup> these coins show no attempt to specify the identity of the veiled head or seated figure. Evidently, Ourania's image was well enough known in the Bosphorus. Thereafter, her head or bust is probably to be identified among the several such female images on the coins of Rhescuporis II (c. AD 68–93).<sup>217</sup> There is general agreement that hers is the fine head, with calathus, on the reverse of a bronze coin of Sauromates I (AD 93–123). This issue may well have celebrated the building work that this king carried out at Apatouron.<sup>218</sup> Subsequently, the goddess recurs in Bosphoran coinage as a seated lady, especially from the late second century until the end of the kingdom in the third century AD. She is heavily draped and veiled, with calathus, and regularly holds a sphere (a patera?) in one hand and a sceptre in the other, also with a prominent star as was appropriate to Ourania.<sup>219</sup> We may well have in this seated figure a representation of her cult-statue at Apatouron, at least as it existed after the apparent upheavals of the later first century AD.<sup>220</sup>

<sup>213</sup> Further, Burnett et al. (1992) 334–5, rightly accepting that she is indeed Ourania. Cf. Frolova and Ireland (2002) 49–52.

<sup>214</sup> So, Heinen (2011).

<sup>215</sup> Burnett et al. (1992) 332; Frolova and Ireland (2002) 70.

<sup>216</sup> Bondarenko (2007) 145; cf. Hind (2008).

<sup>217</sup> It has often been thought that paired heads on some coins show the king and Ourania (e.g. Bondarenko (2007) 145), but one might think too of a queen.

<sup>218</sup> However, Frolova (1979) 17 indicates that it may well pre-date the inscription that recorded the completion of that work (CIRB 1045, AD 105).

<sup>219</sup> E.g. Anokhin (1986) no. 624, with Bondarenko (2007) 144.

<sup>220</sup> Treister (2015) 324 adduces some other small images of a similar kind from the Roman Bosphorus.



Figure 16 Bronze coin of Caesarea (Panticapaeum) depicting Aphrodite Ourania (obverse). © Dr Matthew Shillam

Therefore, the coinage, like the inscribed dedications, suggests that Ourania was a goddess for the kingdom as a whole, where ordered reproduction was crucial at all levels of society. In particular, the production of heirs was the first prerequisite for the successful transition from one ruler to another. While succession remained an inescapable focus of concern for rulers and subjects alike, the birth of a future ruler offered the best hope of stability and prosperity into the future. At the same time, the success of the kingdom depended also upon a more general form of fertility, including the reproduction of subjects (not least to maintain military manpower) and the agricultural fertility of the land and its crops and livestock. We have seen how Aphrodite Ourania was recognised as a major force in those matters already from the time of Hesiod. We have observed too the probable economic contribution of the goddess and her cult to the prosperity of the kingdom: her marine nature once more crossed the straits, while it also offered protection for seaborne trade, fishing and other activity by sea, as illustrated in the graffiti concerning Aphrodite's 'temple' at Nymphaeum.





Figure 17 Bronze coin of Queen Gepaepyris depicting Aphrodite Ourania (reverse).  
© Dr Matthew Shillam

However, no one in antiquity mentions at Apatouron or elsewhere in the Bosphorus the kind of substantial income that courtesans associated with the Corinthian temple of Aphrodite are said to have generated. Certainly, Strabo, who wrote of that in Corinth (8. 6. 20) said nothing of such things in the Bosphorus. His silence means little in itself, for we have noted his silence on the seismic impact of Giants in the Bosphorus, which he discusses at length elsewhere. As for the wealth of Corinth, however, his silence accords well with the very different focus of Ourania's Bosporan cult, on marriage and ordered reproduction. Once again we reach a divide between the different aspects of Aphrodite that the Socratic tradition expressed in terms of the opposition between Ourania and Pandemos. Strabo conveys that opposition as an argument between two women in Corinth – a courtesan and a traditionalist. While the latter denounces the courtesan's inattention to woolworking, the courtesan replies with a feisty pun that depends on wordplay about the loom and the 'masts' of her sailor clients.



Figure 18 Bronze coin of Sauromates II depicting Aphrodite Ourania, seated, holding sceptre and globe (or apple). © Classical Numismatic Group Inc. [www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com)



We have seen that Ourania promoted the family values of wool and the rest at Apatouron, but that was probably not so clear in the case of the Aphrodite at Cēpi or at the famous port of Nymphaeum.<sup>221</sup> The wealth of Apatouron will have depended on more respectable sources, including dedications and donations by the rulers and the elite of the kingdom, about which the dedicatory inscriptions have given us a range of hints. In that regard an inscription of another kind requires separate treatment. It is dated to AD 151. Although it does not name Ourania, its allusion to ‘the goddess’ at or near Phanagoria (where it was excavated in 1859) makes her almost inescapable:<sup>222</sup>

Tiberius Julius King Rhoemetalces, friend of Caesar and friend of the Romans, Pious – as to the lands among the Thiannians(?) that were dedicated by Letodorus, and the pelatai, as set out on the pillar beside – gathered together, increased and restored everything safe to the Goddess, through the agency of Alexander, son of Myrinus, officer of sacred matters. Year 448, in month Apellaios, 20th. (CIRB 976)<sup>223</sup>

This is our only direct insight into the wealth of Bosporan Ourania, if she is indeed the goddess in question. Some features of the inscription are by now familiar. For once again we see royal interest in Ourania of Apatouron. And once again we see how the location of the stone in her vicinity can result in a more allusive reference to her. For that very reason, while this stone is often omitted from discussions of the location of Apatouron,<sup>224</sup> it must be a key piece of evidence in the search for its precise site. However, questions abide. The stone itself is marble, and seems to be a statue base, like so many of the inscribed stones concerning the goddess. The nature of any statue is a matter of speculation – perhaps the goddess, or the king or even the intriguing Letodorus. The latter (his name ringing with the name of Leto, mother of Artemis and Apollo) had evidently dedicated land to the goddess, for reasons that are not explained. Given our earlier discussion, there must be a strong likelihood that the motive lay within his

<sup>221</sup> See p. 273 on the symbolism of the calathus wool-basket.

<sup>222</sup> Similarly we have a priestess of ‘the goddess’ (a woman named Ma) from Hermonassa, where she dedicated a statue in the mid-first century BC. Mention of Apollo in her case might suggest Artemis, but it will have been the context of the dedication that made the identity of the goddess clear. See Pavlichenko (2007).

<sup>223</sup> Τιβέριος Ἰούλιος βασιλεὺς Ῥοιμητάλης, φιλόκαισαρ καὶ φιλορώμαιος, εὐσεβής, τὰς ὑπὸ Λητοδῶρου ἀνατεθείσας γέας ἐν Θιαννείοις καὶ τοὺς πελάτας κατὰ τὸν παρακείμενον τελαμώννα χρόνῳ μειωθέντα συναθροίσας ἅπαντα καὶ πλεονάσας ἀπεκατέστησε τῇ θεῶι σῶα, δι’ ἐπιμελείας Ἀλεξάνδρου Μυρείνου τοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν. η̅μϋ, μηνὶ Ἀπελλαιῶι κ. On minor issues of language, see the CIRB commentators ad loc.: the translation is secure.

<sup>224</sup> E.g. Kuznetsov (2014).

family biography, but we know nothing concrete. We have no idea about the location of that land, except for the unparalleled proper name, most likely 'among Thiannians', but also quite possibly 'in Thiannia' (*vel sim.*). We should certainly not assume that this is a location near Phanagoria, or even on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. For we have seen that the importance and reach of the cult at Apatouron embraced the whole realm. Evidently, this estate came with tied peasants (*pelatai*), whose more precise status in the kingdom is beyond us.<sup>225</sup> Evidently, Letodorus' dedication of the estate was recorded by an inscription on a pillar or the like which stood beside our inscribed base and its statue. It seems that the estate (presumably, its peasantry above all) had dwindled over time since Letodorus' gift. The king had restored and extended it (adding more tied peasants?), and having done so, he could announce in our inscription his own beneficent act to the goddess.

Details of this particular case are a little obscure. It would be nice to know, for example, how long had elapsed since Letodorus' dedication, and whether that might throw any light on the apparent problems at Apatouron in the later first century AD. More important, however, is the example itself, for it is most unlikely that Letodorus was the only rich Bosphoran to dedicate lands to Ourania with the peasants to work them. Of course we have no figures, but the potential is colossal, even if her cult at Apatouron did not have the many thousands of 'slaves' that worked the lands of the cult at Cappadocian Comana, which Strabo knew still better.<sup>226</sup> We may be sure enough that the estates of the goddess were at least sufficient to supply all or most of the needs of her rituals, which may well be those set out in another (unfortunately fragmentary) inscription from Phanagoria, which again mentions simply 'the goddess' (CIRB 1005). In this instance, however, the inscription's mention of these rites as 'mysteries', together with paraphernalia that would suggest their performance at night, or at least in the dark, might raise suspicions that we have here a goddess who is not Ourania but the Great Mother, for example. That might in turn cast some doubt on the divine recipient of Letodorus' dedication.

Such concerns are alleviated by the most unlikely of writers. This is Iamblichus, author of an extraordinary *Babyloniaka*, which we know primarily thanks to the summary provided by Photius. Inevitably, a novel cannot be a source of hard information, but in this case a detail in the story

<sup>225</sup> The term is old and applied in contexts as different as Solonian Athens: LSJ *s.v.*; Nadel (1973) seeks to define it better. Ustinova (1999) 133–5 (in the light of the foregoing discussion).

<sup>226</sup> On its Taurian links, see p. 84.

is highly suggestive, while we should also note that this novel was written in the second century AD, very much at the same time as our inscription.<sup>227</sup> The novel is the love story of Rhodanes and Sinonis, who flee the king of Babylon, who wishes to execute Rhodanes and take Sinonis as his wife. A bizarre pursuit unfolds, in which Aphrodite is seldom far away from the young couple. At a key moment, they receive shelter at an island sanctuary of the goddess in the Mesopotamian region, where Sinonis' suicidal wounds are healed.<sup>228</sup> At this point, Photius reports that Iamblichus offered a digression: it brings us to mysteries of Aphrodite in the Bosporus:

[Iamblichus] has a digression about the sanctuary of Aphrodite, and the requirement that women frequenting it give a public report of the dreams they have seen in the temple. Here he also sets out in detail the story of Pharnoukhos, Pharsiris and Tanais, whence the river Tanais [takes its name], and that the mysteries of Aphrodite among the inhabitants of the place and the land of Tanais are those of Tanais and Pharsiris.<sup>229</sup>

The allusion here is probably to another love story of some kind, where the couple are Tanais and Pharsiris and, presumably, Pharnoukhos has a role similar to the Babylonian king,<sup>230</sup> another unwelcome third party. Clearly, we cannot take this explication of Aphrodite's mysteries any more seriously than the rest of the amusingly lurid detail of the novel, about Mesopotamia, Egyptians and so on. Accordingly, we should not follow those who take this passage to demonstrate that there were mysteries of Aphrodite in historical Tanais, and even seek to use the story to identify local iconography.<sup>231</sup> Nor should we use this passage against inescapable textual emendation.<sup>232</sup> The notion of Aphrodite's mysteries in the Bosporan region is what matters, especially in a context that is broadly contemporary with our inscription.

We find some further help in another peculiar work of later Greek culture, the *On rivers*, whose author we call pseudo-Plutarch.<sup>233</sup> For among

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Millar (1981) on the historical value of novels.

<sup>228</sup> Further, Morales (2006).

<sup>229</sup> Λέγει οὖν ὡς ἐν παρενθήκῃ περὶ τοῦ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἱεροῦ, καὶ ὡς ἀνάγκη τὰς γυναῖκας ἐκεῖσε φοιτῶσας ἀπαγγέλλειν δημοσίᾳ τὰ ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐταῖς ὁρώμενα ὄνειρα. Ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὰ περὶ Φαρνούχου καὶ Φαρσίριδος καὶ Τανάιδος, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ Τανάϊς ὁ ποταμός, λεπτομερῶς διεξέρχεται, καὶ ὅτι τὰ περὶ τὸν τόπον καὶ τὴν χώραν τοῦ Τανάιδος τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν Ἀφροδίτης μυστήρια Τανάιδος καὶ Φαρσίριδος εἰσιν (Photius, Bibl 75b). There seems no reason to excise this passage.

<sup>230</sup> On the names, Ustinova (1999) 171, who takes these to be deities, translating accordingly.

<sup>231</sup> E.g. Bondarenko (2007) 144. For the image, Ustinova (1999) 149 with pl. 15: if this is Aphrodite in some form, there is nothing to indicate Ourania (note the proper caution of Treister (2015) 322–4 on this and the fragment from Batareyka II, as well as the stele found on Mt. Mithridates in 1889). Hope of Apatouros in an inscription was misplaced: SEG 47. 1193.

<sup>232</sup> Both Strabo II. 14. 16 and Clem. Alex. *Protrep.* 5. 58 must entail Anaitis, *pace* Ustinova (1999) 150–1.

<sup>233</sup> Note that he cites Sostratus (of Phanagoria?): FGtH 23F 1 and 5.

the river-tales presented in this idiosyncratic collection, there is a story of Tanais, man and river. As with Iamblichus, so here too Tanais gives his name to the river. We may fairly ask whether the two individuals had more in common besides. Very possibly so. In *On rivers* 14, Tanais resembles Hippolytus, rejecting women in favour of manly pursuits, so that Aphrodite punishes him. Whereas Hippolytus became the object of his stepmother's desire, Tanais was punished with desire for his own mother, which caused him to drown himself in the river that took his name. The mother is not named, unfortunately, though she might be the Pharsiris of Iamblichus' story. If so, the mysteries of Aphrodite in Iamblichus' tale would seem to have their roots in the relationship between mother and son. In any event Aphrodite's power had been demonstrated by the youth's death, as with Hippolytus. And the intra-family focus of both myths might suit Ourania well enough. For again we may see here Ourania's concern with marriage and childbirth played out in myth that problematises those key relationships and insists upon marriage. However, while all this contributes further to a general sense in the imperial Greek world of mysteries of Aphrodite in the Bosporus, it is wholly unclear whether any of this has any connection with actual rites performed there.

Meanwhile *On rivers* 14 envisages a kingdom with strange customs, notably of succession, and a language that is not Greek. There is no sign of the historical settlement of Tanais, either before or after Tanais' suicide. Meanwhile, it also brings Phrixus and the Golden Ram into the story, as if Tanais were close to the Hellespont, and indeed it relocates Kriou metōpon of the southern Crimea to the region of the lower Don. Such geographical insouciance is important, because it shows how, in the world of the novel and its like, mysteries of Aphrodite at Apatouron or elsewhere around the region might be switched to Tanais or vice versa. No doubt few ancient readers of these works were disturbed by such imprecision. In the loose geographical perspective of Iamblichus' novel, Apatouron could easily be imagined as in the lands of Tanais. Therefore, while the detail here about Tanais itself cannot safely be applied to the actual practices of the city of that name, the novel does provide some little confirmation of our interpretation of the inscription (and vice versa)<sup>234</sup> in that there was evidently some sense of mysteries of Aphrodite around the Sea of Azov in the second century AD. Moreover, the story offers some further sense of what ritual at such a sanctuary might entail, featuring women sleeping in the temple

<sup>234</sup> See further, Ustinova (1999) 131–3 on the details: we should note mention of a *neokoreion*.

with a view to gathering dreams.<sup>235</sup> We saw at the beginning of this chapter how dreams of Ourania might be interpreted. Finally, we should also be clear that nowhere in Photius' summary is Aphrodite named as Ourania. However, the whole focus of these stories is the achievement of wedded bliss by the lovers' escape from wild passions into formal marriage. We have seen repeatedly how that is the work of Ourania. Taken as a whole, therefore, inscription and novel(s) together indicate mysteries of Aphrodite at Apatouron and quite possibly elsewhere around the Bosphorus. Finally, if that is right, we should note too in the inscription the presence of a *neokoreion* there (implying also *neokoroî*) at Apatouron as well as a night-time ritual there, which might well involve women in search of prophetic dreams. The very recent publication of a fragmentary dedication from Hellenistic Tanais to (as it seems) Aphrodite mistress of Apatouron,<sup>236</sup> is no great surprise, but it constitutes valuable support for the strong probability that her cult at Apatouron bound Tanais into the social, political and economic life of the kingdom, as it did with the rest of the kingdom's scattered geography.<sup>237</sup>

### Bosporan Ourania and the Roman Imperial Cult

In the course of this chapter we have seen many reasons, therefore, why the goddess might well be selected to feature on Bosporan coins, on both sides of the straits. While her patronage was key to the success of the rulers and their state in all these ways, she and her cult-centre at Apatouron were of sufficient significance to express a key part of the kingdom's identity through the coinage. All that is clear in outline, at least. More difficult, however, is to assess the cult's historical development, since we have only a random scattering of texts, whether literary or epigraphic. While Hecataeus does enough to suggest Apatouron's early prominence, the range of dedications reaches down to the middle of the third century AD, when the kingdom finally failed. Ininthimeus, the last Bosporan king, was still minting coins that bore the image of the seated Ourania. Within that great sweep of many centuries, the cult persisted strongly at Apatouron. While it may well have contributed to the transformation of the Bosporan cities into a kingdom during the fifth century BC in particular, we have also noted how

<sup>235</sup> Public announcement in Mesopotamia is harder to swallow.

<sup>236</sup> Ivantchik and Tokhtas'yev (2017).

<sup>237</sup> A strong association between love-stories and the River Tanais emerges, especially given the flexible location of the river in geography after Alexander; see in detail, Braund (2018).

the wealth of Apatouron must have presented an inviting target in times of trouble, which were frequent enough, including the latter half of the first century AD, only a few decades after Strabo completed his *Geography*. However, in the Bosphorus as elsewhere around the Greek world, in public and in private (the two coalesce under monarchy), Aphrodite was overwhelmingly and consistently a mighty force for order, unity and organised fertility. Geographical divisions, physical and human, were easily overcome even in this mosaic of a kingdom by a goddess who brought together the very heaven and earth. Her foundational conquest of the Giants expressed all that and, at the same time, confirmed her proper place in the extraordinary landscape of the Taman, with its clefts, volcanoes and other seismic manifestations.

In the Roman period, with a new line of Bosporan kings after the end of the Spartocids and fall of Mithridates Eupator, the coins hint at a new beginning for the cult of Ourania, albeit very much within the framework of continuity attested by the long line of dedications to her. At this time too the Roman imperial family appears noisily in the epigraphic and numismatic record of the Bosphorus, not least in the Taman. By the middle of the second century AD or so, there was a Kaisareion in the Bosporan kingdom, a physical focus for the imperial cult. It may have been erected long before, for its date and precise location are unknown, because (for reasons that remain obscure) it is mentioned only once in Bosporan epigraphy, on a stone found in the Taman peninsula at Phanagoria.<sup>238</sup> The discovery of the only inscription to mention a Bosporan Kaisareion in the environs of the principal sanctuary of the kingdom is all the more suggestive when we bear in mind that this is Aphrodite, or Venus, the ancestress of the early emperors and of the Romans as a whole. However, the nature of any relationship between Ourania and the imperial cult in the kingdom is at best elusive. The inscription is very fragmentary, but evidently entails a priesthood for life in the imperial cult, to be retained in this elite family. Already, from the reign of Cotys I in the middle of the first century AD, we see Bosporan kings announcing themselves within the kingdom as high priests of the Sebastoi, an unusual habit among the rulers friendly to Rome.<sup>239</sup> Certainly, Cotys had good reason to express his loyalty to Rome, after Roman arms had secured his throne against his brother Mithridates VIII in Claudius' Bosporan war. However, we may

<sup>238</sup> CIRB 1050, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge: note that Taman is Hermonassa, not now Phanagoria.

<sup>239</sup> On the behaviour of such kings, see further Braund (1984); cf. (2015a).

well have here in the Bosphorus an indication of a broader phenomenon found elsewhere at this time, for example at Aphrodisias and Aezani. For in those cases, as probably in the Bosphorus, the expansion of those among the Julio-Claudians in receipt of cult had caused comparable administrative change by this time.<sup>240</sup> The Kaisareion inscription gives a rare glimpse of the priestly personnel beneath these royal high priests, while we should probably suppose that in the Bosphorus as elsewhere it was precisely the expansion of such personnel in the course of the Principate that led to the emergence of high priests at all. Meanwhile, we can only suspect that the kingdom also shared in a tendency across the Greek east to bring together local cults of Aphrodite with the imperial cult under the Julio-Claudians, very much her self-proclaimed descendants, even if we have no text from the Bosphorus which explicitly makes that connection, such as we sometimes find elsewhere.<sup>241</sup> More generally, images of the imperial family in various forms continue to accumulate, thanks to archaeology, from all parts of the kingdom and from the reign of Augustus onwards.<sup>242</sup>

Striking too are the various dedications of Bosporan rulers to the early imperial family, which seem to show their journey towards the high priesthood declared by Cotys I. They cluster in the Taman peninsula, though once again precise ancient locations there can seldom be recovered. However, in 1983, archaeologists excavated a statue base at Hermonassa which was a dedication by Queen Pythodoris to Livia as her benefactress.<sup>243</sup> Queen Dynamis, probably Pythodoris' predecessor as wife of Polemo I, had made a similar dedication to Livia,<sup>244</sup> another statue, at a location that is much less clear. The inscribed statue base was found, reused, at Phanagoria (CIRB 978). Another dedication of Queen Dynamis was found built into a church at Hermonassa and subsequently lost. It is very tempting to connect it with her dedication to Livia, for here she honours Augustus himself (CIRB 1046). Were both statues originally located together? While Dynamis honours Livia as wife of Augustus and her benefactress, she honours Augustus himself as her saviour and benefactor, and ruler of all the earth and sea. Rather later, under Rhescuporis II, Vespasian was honoured on a marble slab pulled from the sea near the adjacent shoreline (CIRB 1047). The editors of CIRB describe this stone

<sup>240</sup> Aphrodisias: Reynolds (1996) 48. Aezani: Levick and Mitchell (1988) = MAMA 9, xxiv.

<sup>241</sup> E.g. Wallensten (2009) 178–9.

<sup>242</sup> Further, e.g. Treister and Vinokurov (2016) on imperial portraits on pottery from Artezian, in the Crimean interior.

<sup>243</sup> SEG 39. 695; cf. 44. 658. The statue may have been of bronze: Boltunova (1989) 86.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Purcell (1986).



as 'obviously coming from ancient Hermonassa', which might be correct. It is taken to be the facing of another statue base.

This cluster of dedications to the emperors becomes all the more impressive when set in the context of other such inscriptions from the kingdom. For, apart from these, we have only dedications from the royal capital at Panticapaeum, where some such dedications were surely to be expected. The earliest is Dynamis again, honouring Augustus with a statue: the inscribed slab was found during excavations for the Church of John the Baptist in the lower part of the modern town (CIRB 38). In this dedication for the first and only time in the Bosporus the living emperor is named as a god, as well as son of a god. Next, chronologically, we also have a dedication by Cotys I of another statue, to the emperor Nero: the stone was apparently reused in building a Turkish fort. It is here for the first time that a Bosporan ruler describes himself as 'high priest of the Sebastoi' (CIRB 41). From the same fort probably came the remains of another statue base, in honour of Hadrian (CIRB 47). Its date (AD 133) and its mention of the enrolment of the new king in a list held at Rome indicate that King Rhoemetalces had erected it in the context of his approved succession to Cotys II, whose recent death is mentioned by Arrian in his *Periplus* as an issue for the emperor.<sup>245</sup> Another dedication to Hadrian was made by someone who might not be a member of the royal family (perhaps a priest in the imperial cult?), naming him 'master of the world' and 'benefactor of Bosporan cities'. It was found near Dynamis' dedication in the city.<sup>246</sup> Subsequently, after the Kaisareion inscription from the Taman and a dedication to Caracalla found in lower Kerch (CIRB 52), we have no dedications to the emperors and no sign at all of the imperial cult, except – crucially – the continued use of the title 'high priest of the Sebastoi' by the Bosporan kings.

Inferences from this scatter of material are difficult, but there is a *prima facie* case for suspecting that the statues dedicated on the Taman peninsula were erected in proximity to each other. Of course, they do not all clearly entail imperial cult as such. However, a centre of that cult must have been an attractive location for the Bosporan rulers, while the Kaisareion mentioned in CIRB 1050 would seem to suit very well. Was this Kaisareion (if located on Taman at all) in the vicinity of the great sanctuary of Ourania at Apatouron? And should we suppose that the dedications of statues to Livia, in particular, by two Bosporan queens had any link either to the

<sup>245</sup> On the list, see Rich (1989); cf. Arrian, *Periplus* 17. 3.

<sup>246</sup> CIRB 48; cf. SEG 56. 908 *bis*.

Kaisareion or to the cult of Aphrodite in any form? If Hermonassa was the focus of these and other Taman dedications, as has often been thought and as modern excavation has done a little to confirm, we might prefer to suppose that the Kaisareion was situated there, at some small distance from the elusive Apatouron. And that might help also to account for a Flavian dedication that does not sit well with the apparently damaged state of Apatouron in the decades after AD 69. However, buildings and locations are only part of the much larger (and no less elusive) texture of cult in the Bosporan kingdom. If, as most believe, the imperial cult on Taman was not centred at Apatouron, for whatever reason, we may nevertheless retain the suspicion that, under the Julio-Claudians in particular, there was a relationship within the religion of the region between the cult of the emperors and the mistress of Apatouron. For it is hard to see how two such important religious institutions, with broadly convergent ideologies, could have functioned in the kingdom (still less in the Taman) without significant interaction, if only through the substantial attentions that the Bosporan rulers gave to both of them.

*Epilogue: Artemis, Aphrodite and Demeter*

The preceding chapters have shown how the society and politics of the Bosporan kingdom turned on the axis of two goddesses, the Artemis-like Parthenos and Aphrodite Ourania. To a significant extent, they marked the two halves of the kingdom. For Parthenos predominated in the Crimea, while Ourania's great cult-centre at Apatouron was firmly across the straits of Kerch in the Taman peninsula. It is important to be clear, even so, that this geographical separation was not a matter of exclusion or alienation. For we have seen how Aphrodite Ourania, 'mistress of Apatouron', is well attested also in the epigraphy of the Crimean side of the kingdom, where there were also mud-volcanoes enough to support her cult-aetiology there too. While it is true that Parthenos has so far not been attested on the Taman peninsula, the evidence for her on the Crimean side is of a nature to suggest that similar local data could turn up on the Taman side too (cf. the temple of Artemis Agrotera, built on the Taman side in the fourth century BC). Both goddesses appear in our evidence as drawing the two sides of the kingdom into a single whole entity. Accordingly, a key theme of this book has been coherence in this most disparate and disjointed of kingdoms, which not only incorporates a peculiar variety of communities, peoples and cultures, but also straddles a major waterway, with a complex of islets, marshes, and more.

Parthenos offers coherence most strikingly at the very crossing of the straits, with her cult-centre at Crimean Parthenium reaching across to that of Achilles on Taman. As Herodotus tells us, Parthenos was not so much Artemis as Iphigenia among Greek-informed Taurians, so that the contra-positioning of these two cults marked not only geographical and physical separation but also the unrealised conjunction of the two, which had been expressed most forcefully in the tragedy of Iphigenia, whereby her marriage to Achilles had become her sacrifice to Artemis. It was at this critical transformation of ritual that Artemis had intervened by whisking the girl to the Taurians. Accordingly, the theme of marriage

was close in every way to her Taurian after-life, as also the theme of sacrifice, and human sacrifice in particular. Her strange and unconsummated relationship with Achilles was central to that, while the presence of the Taurian element not only in the works of Athenian tragedians (Sophocles, it has been argued, as well as Euripides), but also in the epic cycle, as we are told, confirms that the Crimea is much more than some exotic detail. Among Greeks of the Mediterranean, Taurians offered an origin and some excuse for bloody ritual and even human sacrifice at Athens, Sparta and elsewhere. However, in the Bosporan kingdom this Greek myth offered a means of organising the landscape of the kingdom across its cardinal division at the straits. Indeed, that linkage between Iphigenia and Achilles was applicable in a similar fashion to Crimean connections westwards also, where Crimean Parthenos could be seen as reaching across to Achilles' great cult on the singular island of Leuke towards the Danubian region. More broadly, we must observe too the similarities in the fates of the two protagonists. Both entered a new existence far from their homelands after a form of death: Achilles as a brooding ghostly presence on Leuke and Iphigenia in the Crimea, saved from death by Artemis, and yet all but removed from life too. And both performed a kind of human sacrifice. For while Iphigenia presided over ghastly rites among the Taurians, Achilles sacrificed Trojan captives at the funeral of Patroclus in *Iliad* 22 in a famous act of savage madness. Such connections and continuities were available for those who wished to consider and explore them, as Syrisus of Chersonesus may have done in his work on the epiphanies of Parthenos. Meanwhile, we have observed also the local myth which probably explained the existence of a cult-centre at Parthenium on the straits, according to which a Parthenos-like deity had used a deer to cause huntsmen to discover that the straits could indeed be crossed, injecting a fervour for the chase that might amount to a form of madness.

Through such considerations we begin to glimpse the connectivity that was central to notions of Parthenos-Iphigenia-Artemis which tied together a large expanse of the northern Black Sea in which the link between the Crimea and Taman was a major bond that held the kingdom together across the intervening waters. That local concern was still more fundamental to the Bosporan kingdom than were the numerous connections which were thereby also opened up to the rest of the Greek world – on the Greek mainland, across Asia Minor, Syria and more. In that way Parthenos connected the kingdom internally and also across great expanses of the Greek world, including potentially also the great cult-centres of Artemis at

Delos, Ephesus and so on. Moreover, the deity also facilitated dealings with the city of Chersonesus, with which it shared the Crimea, whether in war, peaceful coexistence or outright control: the relationship took different forms across the centuries, but Parthenos (as the city always called her) evidently constituted a deity who was common to all the settled inhabitants of the peninsula. Syrus held forth on the deity's invaluable epiphanies as well as the human benefits provided to his native Chersonesus by the Bosphoran rulers. In time of war between Chersonesus and the Bosphorans, the city claimed the military support and protection of Parthenos, as it may also have done in the story of protective womanhood that centres on Gykia. However, we may reasonably infer that in any clash between the two both city and kingdom declared that they had the deity on their side.

The intellectual creativity of the Bosphorans emerged strongly from our consideration of Aphrodite Ourania at Apatouron, where too crossing the straits seems to have been an issue. True, one could wish for much more detail, but the important point is very clear. For Strabo shows us as a single phenomenon both her cult at Apatouron and the aetiological myth that underpinned it. And he stresses that this aetiology was a local creation: our inability to name a particular author hardly matters. In addition, we happen to hear a little about the writings produced in the Hellenistic (as it seems) Taman. Again, it matters little here whether we identify Sostratus of Phanagoria with Sosicrates of the same city or keep them distinct, though it would be nice to know. Much more important than matters of authorship is the observable thematic relevance of this Phanagoritan work to the local cult at Phanagoritan Apatouron. The work on Tiresias' transgendered biography could hardly be more at home with Aphrodite Ourania, as we have seen. In particular, Herodotus reports a north Pontic tradition that she was the goddess who inflicted the 'female disease' on the descendants of those Scythians who had ravaged her cult at Ascalon, 'which made them women instead of men' (Hdt. 1.105). As the aetiological myth there showed, the cult at Apatouron entailed a series of themes and issues around the power of desire, physical violence, deceit and love in its many forms. For Ourania had conquered and killed the Giants who came to rape her by deploying her more subtle charms to trick them into the hands of a lurking Heracles, who despatched them.

The landscape features prominently in this local aetiology, including not only Heracles' hiding-place, but also the burial of the Giants. True, Strabo does not proceed in his summary version to explain what was done with the despatched Giants, for that was not germane to his specific concern with the aetiology of the cult. However, something had to be done

with them. In tales of defeated Giants elsewhere in the Greek world, most strikingly in Magna Graecia, they are buried beneath the earth from which they had come, so that there is a *prima facie* case for supposing as much too in the Taman peninsula. In such tales the buried Giants were taken to be the source of seismic activity of all kinds, including major volcanoes. That is crucial for the Taman, where not only seismic activity, but also a series of larger and smaller volcanoes (often called ‘mud volcanoes’) spread across the landscape. In consequence, we may be sure that these Giants too were buried, and therefore we can observe another kind of aetiology at work in the myth related by Strabo. This was a local dimension to the very widespread Greek concern with the defeat of Giants by the established Olympian order, the assurance of civilisation through the conquest of chaos. Elsewhere, of course, even in the Black Sea region, Aphrodite’s contribution was of much less interest. For Olympian deities could all claim to have played their part, including Poseidon, whose giant-killing was depicted on a horse-frontlet (a *prometopidion*) from Bol’shaya Bliznitsa.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, these explanations of the landscape seem to extend also to the crossing of the straits. Again, Strabo might have been more helpful, but the fact that there was a cult-centre of Heracles close by Parthenium and Porthmium on the narrowest section of the straits must be relevant to the appearance of Heracles to help Ourania at Apatouron. Of course, Heracles was enormous, as his gigantic footprint in the rock near Tyras demonstrated on the north coast of the Black Sea (Hdt. 4. 82). He could stride across the straits with minimal difficulty. However, in bringing together Heracles, with his centre in the eastern Crimea, with Ourania at Apatouron, the local myth there once again spans the waterway and binds together the two sides of the Bosporan kingdom. If that is right, we may conclude that in their different ways both Parthenos and Ourania serve to connect the kingdom.

In that way we start to appreciate that the Bosporan kingdom boasted its own Greek culture, which was not simply derivative or taken second-hand from the Mediterranean world. No doubt the great works of Athens, for example, were of substantial interest in the Bosporus, especially in view

<sup>1</sup> On this burial complex, see Vinogradov (2009); Koshelenko (2010), and further below. On the frontlet, see Treister (2001) 125, noting its loss after transfer out of the Hermitage. Aphrodite is absent too from the scenes of Gigantomachy on the rhyton deposited eastwards from Krasnodar in a burial at Ulyap (and probably made in the region), where Hermes (often her associate) is shown twice: Ksenofontova and Zaitseva (1997); Treister (2000). We may note that Poseidon and possibly Hermes (or Ares) appear with her on the lost fragment of sarcophagus(?) shown above on p. 204. We now have Aspurgus’ dedication to Hermes and Heracles from Gorgippia, evidently a gymnasium: Zavoykina and Novichikhin (2017).

of the broader political and economic relationships that developed by the fifth century or earlier between Athens and the northern Black Sea. At the turn of the fifth into the fourth century we can see the Athenian elite taking refuge in the Bosporan kingdom against the uncertainties around the end of the Peloponnesian War, as did Lysias' Mantitheus and Gylon, grandfather of Demosthenes. It was at about this time too that a young Bosporan aristocrat had come to see Athenian culture for himself, as we are told in Isocrates' *Trapeziticus*, which offers a picture of lively interaction between a Bosporan community resident in Athens and the Bosporan king at home. Presumably Athenian plays which featured the Black Sea and the north bore a special interest, notably *Prometheus Bound*, Sophocles' *Scythians*, Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and so on. Indeed, some Black Sea element might occur in rather less obvious plays, as in the *Oresteia* or *Seven against Thebes*. Moreover, insofar as Athenian tragedy (to pursue only one kind of creativity) dealt in universal human themes of family, justice and the like, they had another kind of important relevance in the Bosporan kingdom. However, not all was entirely relevant and not all was comfortable for the Bosporan king. For example, there was no ready place in the Bosporan theatre for the democratic values that underpin much Athenian tragedy, as Isocrates' fearful speaker makes clear in the *Trapeziticus*. Accordingly, if only for political and locational reasons, there was a local Bosporan need for artistic creativity. The many theatres of the kingdom will have hosted plays of local origin as well as foreign imports, no doubt often edited for reproduction.

For much of the Athenian detail, including cult aetiology, might well puzzle a Bosporan audience without particular benefit. We have seen how Bosporans produced their own aetiologies for their own circumstances of cult and landscape, as did colonial cultures elsewhere, far removed from the Greek heartland in much the same way. Increasingly we understand in some detail how that happened in southern Italy and Sicily, so that it is not hard to envisage similar processes in the Bosporan kingdom, much as Strabo informs us in the case of Aphrodite Ourania at Apatouron. Of course, the Athenians had their own aetiology of deception (*apatè*). That was important, as it seems, in the key festival of the Apatouria. This was a primary ritual context for the ordering of society as children (we hear most about boys) proceeded through the stages of life from birth, through adulthood to marriage, all in the framework of kinship organisations and so the community at large. However, that Athenian aetiology was located at the frontier with Boeotia, a detail which underlines its specificity. The Apatouria festival may have been universal among Ionians (Hdt. 1. 147),



as we have seen, but its aetiological myth could only be transferred with changes. Such transferral may have happened, particularly where real or imagined kinship with Athens was involved. However, there was no strong reason why the Bosporans should have adopted the Athenian aetiology, even with adaptations, for the Apatouria which they, as Ionians, will have celebrated.

In consequence, a case has been made here that the Bosporan Apatouria gave a particular prominence to Aphrodite Ourania and her cult at Apatouron. For we have seen, among the fragmented evidence for the festival in Athens and elsewhere, that different deities may hold pride of place from community to community, including Aphrodite and Heracles on occasion.<sup>2</sup> On that argument, the Bosporan Apatouria was not rooted, as at Athens, in paradigmatic duelling at the margins with Boeotia, but in Aphrodite's deceit and Heracles brute force: that powerful combination of brain and brawn, of male and female, offered an origin for the Apatouria that was different in kind, but no less appropriate in principle. For this Bosporan aetiology showed male and female cooperating to overcome an enemy that was familiar among Greeks and emblematic of disorder, barbarity and the threat to civilisation. And we have seen how this Bosporan aetiology had no need of Boeotia, but was located firmly in the Bosporan landscape.

We have observed also the strong royal concern with Ourania and her cult-centre at Apatouron. That is well attested from the epigraphy, ranging across centuries. Given the content of these inscriptions and information on Ourania elsewhere around the Greek world, as at Athens, this royal concern clearly hinged substantially on reproduction. The production of children was a particular sphere of the goddess, which helps to explain the nature of her punishment of (some) of the descendants of the Scythians who sacked her temple at Ascalon: they would not have children, while the story evades the requirement that some must have reproduced to maintain the 'disease' across the generations. The production of heirs was key to the issue of succession that dogs the institution of monarchy at every turn. It was a wise Bosporan ruler who, like King Aegeus at Athens, honoured the goddess in search of progeny and hope of an assured future for his family, his realm and, perhaps above all, his legacy. While the inscriptions give specific instances, the general point is underscored by the appearance

<sup>2</sup> The so-called Tomb of Heracles from Gorgippia (c. AD 200), decorated with the twelve labours of Heracles and 'family scenes', might be relevant here: further, Akimova (2015). For broader context and fine illustrations, see too Alekseyeva (2010), with key bibliography.

of Eros too at Apatouron, the goddess' own son. We noticed a certain echo between the royal family at Panticapaeum and the divine family at Apatouron, which further enriches the sense of crossing and coherence entailed in the cult. Moreover, it is worth stressing the further relevance of all this to the very festival of the Apatouria. For at its very heart lay the registration of children. That superficially administrative – even bureaucratic – procedure was very much about the assurance of the community's future by the ordered production and incorporation of offspring. The royal concern with succession in that sense exemplifies a broader concern among all Bosporean families and so the Bosporean state itself. Once that is understood, it is all the easier to appreciate the importance of the cult at Apatouron for the Bosporean kingdom as the focus of order in society. By the same token, we can better grasp too the appropriateness of the Giants' threat to that social order, coherence and continuity. For they were the antithesis to ordered reproduction and the rest. In sharp contrast with the values and practice of Ourania, their objective was violent sex for the purposes of brutish pleasure, with no concern for any offspring that might appear. Heracles and Aphrodite had asserted the ordered future of the kingdom by dealing with that specific threat.

There has been much concern in the scholarly literature with the ethnic origins of these cults, particularly in eastern European writings. In consequence, much more attention has been given to the Greekness (or non-Greekness) of Parthenos and her cult at Apatouron than would otherwise have been the case in this book. Since this particular debate is likely to persist, a clear outline of conclusions in this matter may be worthwhile. First, this book has been concerned not so much with origins as with the functioning of cults and deities in Bosporean society. Second, there is nothing in our evidence to require that we take these deities to be of local origin, except insofar as Herodotus and other Greeks insisted on the Taurian origin of human sacrifice to Parthenos: we have seen that this notion was both self-serving in locating all blame and barbarity away from Greeks and also notably Greek-looking, insofar as Herodotus claims that Taurians saw Parthenos as Iphigenia (Hdt. 4. 103). Of course, it is quite possible that Parthenos had some pre-Greek, non-Greek form among the Taurians, but we should also be aware (as explained above) that Greeks liked to imagine as part of their colonial history that a local deity of the colonial place had chosen to accept them. As for Apatouron, claims of local origins centre upon wholly unconvincing attempts at reconstructions of the Scythian language(s). Since we have seen how the notion of deceit (*apate*) was fundamental to the cult at Apatouron, and not only a poor

piece of local etymologising, it is hard to support pleas for Scythian influence in the name. Again, however, the possibility (like most possibilities) cannot be ruled out *tout court*. In sum, while we may be sure enough that there was a substantial native element in the establishment of the communities which came to assert their Greekness, it is hard to trace its impact even in broad terms, while neither Parthenos nor Apatouron give any particular reason (beyond Herodotus, arguably, in the former case) to suppose origins that were other than Greek. In actual practice, it hardly matters, because both Parthenos and Apatouron were wholly embraced within the culture of the Bosporan kingdom, wherein scholarly attempts at internal ethnic distinctions between Greeks, Scythians and others are routinely unpersuasive.<sup>3</sup> The quest for ethnic origins is inevitably regressive, while it is the ideas and practice (the ‘identity’, we may say) of Bosporans which concerns the present study.

We have seen how the Bosporan cults of Parthenos and Aphrodite Ourania at Apatouron each in their different ways fit into the patterns of Greek religion that may be found elsewhere. Even Parthenos-Iphigenia had roots among the Boeotians and Megarians who had founded the mother-city of Chersonesus, that is Heraclea Pontica. Others in antiquity could see her, from a distance in Athens or elsewhere, as Artemis, entailing (as some said) Delian involvement in colonising Chersonesus too. Aphrodite Ourania, likewise, fits comfortably into the broader picture of Greek religion, as exemplified by her cult in Athens, for example. And yet here is a telling twist. For Greeks liked to believe (quite possibly correctly) that she had been brought into Greek culture from another ‘barbarian’ source, the Phoenicians. It seems that a sense of her foreignness was important (for some, at least) to her identity among Greeks, rather as Taurian origins were taken as important to cults of Artemis which claimed roots in the Crimea, as was said of Spartan Orthia and Athenian Tauropolos. However, we observed the proximity of a Parthenos and a Tauropolos along the River Strymon, which in itself offers a warning against the simple acceptance of ancient testimony about origins and much besides.

<sup>3</sup> The superficial level of these debates is exemplified by Tsetskhladze (2014), esp. 320–1 on the Bosporan kingdom, whose abuse of sources and dubious assertions about complex issues are characteristic of this vexatious tendency to bandy about ethnic labels, to claim conflict or peace amid the unknown, and to complain about the (apparently surmountable!) difficulty of defining what is Scythian, what is Greek and so on. As usual in such publications, the notions of current writers take the fore, while the outlook(s) of the ancient writers are mishandled and the attitudes of participants (notably inhabitants of the Bosporan kingdom) about their own identities and ethnicities are given no consideration at all.

These are large and weighty matters, which cannot and will not be argued here. For this is not an attempt to tackle the whole religion of the Bosporan kingdom. That would be an enormous task and would require a much bigger book. It would also have been impossible in any very satisfactory fashion, because our knowledge of Bosporan religion is so very patchy. While literary authors usually have their gaze elsewhere, archaeology is not well suited to the understanding of ancient ideology, despite commonplace claims to the contrary, but material remains can be of the first importance, even so.<sup>4</sup> Often helpful are inscriptions, but these are few, so that a single new discovery might bring a major shift. In the Bosporus the physical remains of cult-sites cannot, in many cases, be linked with any confidence to a particular deity, let alone a particular form of that deity. At Cepi, for example, we certainly seem to have a cult-site of Aphrodite, but there is no reason to think of her as Ourania. Among the many important discoveries at Nymphaeum a temple of Aphrodite has often been claimed, but the attribution is not at all certain, while we have seen how the painting of a ship named Isis there raises a series of further questions. Artemis Ephesia and her cult-places are attested by inscriptions, but we have seen how claims of a temple of the goddess on the acropolis at Panticapaeum are as uncertain as they are enticing. The unwary reader should be warned that the desire to attribute structures to deities is as strong for the Bosporus as for other regions of the ancient world. Also at Panticapaeum, on the north slope of the acropolis, we have 'Begichev's Cave', where the discovery of a three-headed female image (made c. 300 BC) has allowed attribution to Hekate. However, the extended and rather muddled study of the cave over many years means that we can now do little with it. A reasonable inference is that this small place of cult was strongly linked to the city-entrance nearby.<sup>5</sup> It may belong to Hekate, but nymphs were at home in caves and might be represented in our image. For all those reasons, the work here can contribute little to the larger question of Hekate's role in Bosporan religion and her potential linkage to Parthenos, which was discussed earlier in this book. In the case of Mayskaya Gora, in the hills above Phanagoria, dedications suggest the

<sup>4</sup> For more general reflection on the archaeologist's concern with religion, see Renfrew (2000) with the essays collected in Raja and Rüpke (2015).

<sup>5</sup> The tangled story is well set out by Ohlerich (2011) 79–83, whose valuable dissertation may be found at [http://rosdok.uni-rostock.de/file/rosdok\\_derivate\\_00000004558/Dissertation\\_Ohlerich\\_2011.pdf](http://rosdok.uni-rostock.de/file/rosdok_derivate_00000004558/Dissertation_Ohlerich_2011.pdf) (a reference I owe to M. Muratov). Note also Tolstikov (1987), and in general Zografou (2010).

cult of a female deity or deities, but there was never good reason to interpret this as Apatouron, an identification that now has little support.<sup>6</sup>

### The 'Priestess' at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa

Whether the woman buried in the late fourth century BC at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa (Tomb 1) on the Taman peninsula has been identified correctly as a priestess<sup>7</sup> remains very doubtful. The view that she was a priestess in life is an inference from the various artefacts in her tomb that show goddesses and the like, and from the fact that her body was deposited with a calathus on its head. The gold cover of this calathus depicts Amazons fighting griffins, as we shall see (though some have thought them Arimaspians, since they are the more familiar foe of griffins).<sup>8</sup> But we must be clear that the calathus need have no ritual or religious bearing, and can certainly not be taken as a marker of priestly function.<sup>9</sup> In fact, it is routinely difficult to distinguish a priestess by virtue of her dress or general iconography, unless she has a temple key.<sup>10</sup> There is no such key to be seen at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa. Rather the calathus evokes female activity of a traditional virtue, specifically woolworking, since it takes the form of a wool-basket.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, an extraordinary recent study has demonstrated in comprehensive detail how Bosporans of more humble means than our 'priestess' were interred with accompanying expressions of their virtues. On their relatively humble gravestones we find the calathus wool-basket once more.<sup>12</sup>

Even if she was not a priestess, however, the iconography of her ornaments is of substantial interest, for they offer a glimpse of local Bosporan concern with some of the figures we have considered in this book. Two pendants (found at either side of the head – so-called 'temple ornaments')<sup>13</sup> show a

<sup>6</sup> See in detail Ohlerich (2011), esp. 200; cf. Muratov (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Still the standard view: e.g. Trofimova (2007) 61 and 269 (of Demeter or Aphrodite).

<sup>8</sup> Ohlerich (2011) 199 for bibliography. Minns (1913) 423–9 is a model of clear description (with some fine drawings), noting some of the unclarity in the archaeological record for the excavations. Recently, Kalashnik (2004) 103–11 offers a summary of the distinct burials in the great mound, which are not to be run together without some caution. For useful (if incomplete) inventories of the different burials there, see Meyer (2013) 352–69 and esp. Vlasova (2010), indicating how many appliqués, for example, have not been published.

<sup>9</sup> Kreuz (2008) deals admirably with attempts to see the calathus as a direct link to Demeter and the like, both at the Three Brothers kurgan and elsewhere.

<sup>10</sup> Connelly (2007), esp. 117–63, who reasonably omits any discussion of the calathus and shows a range of priestesses without such headgear.

<sup>11</sup> The evidence on its significance is well summarised by Lewis (2002) 135.

<sup>12</sup> Kreuz (2012) 183 and *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> She also had earrings, ornate but without any image: Trofimova (2007) 272 (in colour).





Figure 19 Bol'shaya Bliznitsa: nineteenth-century drawing of excavations (F. Gross)



Figure 20 Depiction of Demeter or Kore from Bol'shaya Bliznitsa



Figure 21 Examining Demeter or Kore at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa (F. Gross)

Nereid seated on a hippocamp, with a dolphin below, making clear the marine context. She clutches her mount with one hand, while the other holds up a piece of armour. On one pendant this is a cuirass, on the other a greave. The combination of Nereid and armour points to the Homeric tradition in *Iliad* 18, where Thetis went to Hephaestus and had him make new armour for her son Achilles on his return to battle after the death of Patroclus. In other versions, particularly in art, she might even dress him in

his armour.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile we saw in the [previous chapter](#) just how important Hephaestus was in Phanagoria and the Taman peninsula at large, so that the allusion to him must also have some bearing here. We surely therefore have Thetis herself on each of these pendants, where the Nereid is certainly rather matronly.<sup>15</sup> While the theme was not uncommon, it still had particular resonance in this Bosporan context, where we have observed Achilles' importance both in himself and through his association with Parthenos.<sup>16</sup> That helps to explain why a similar pendant was deposited also in a burial at Kul' Oba, outside Kerch. The pendants were evidently suspended from a golden band which was decorated with a winged Nike at each end.

Also of interest are the appliquéés that were sewn onto the clothing of our 'priestess'. Among their considerable number, repeated square appliquéés of Demeter, Kore and Heracles are usually treated as a group.<sup>17</sup> Since Apatouron lay somewhere close by, Heracles' role in its myth, and therefore probably in its cult, has been thought relevant to the burial.<sup>18</sup> However, while the link may have been made in antiquity, the significance of the hero was so polyvalent that many another link might have been at least as relevant. For example, in such a burial context, together with Demeter and Kore, one might think more about the journey into after-life in the underworld. Heracles had entered the underworld and returned with Cerberus, evidently on this very peninsula as well as at other locations that claimed the honour, while near his cult-centre at Heracleum by the crossing to the peninsula Heracles appeared again in a funerary context, rising from mortality to a place among the gods.<sup>19</sup> Aristophanes, in *Frogs*, makes a comedy of Heracles' ability to move in and out of Hades, which not only brings Dionysiac theatre into our considerations,<sup>20</sup> but also suggests some awareness in the Athenian audience that the Cimmerian Bosphorus offered a route into Hades.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, tragedy too could bring Dionysiac festival together with Heracles' ability to conquer death in this way, most strikingly in Euripides' *Alcestis*. As *Alcestis* became a model for the loving wife, so her example was recalled too in funerary contexts,

<sup>14</sup> Davies (2007).

<sup>15</sup> On Thetis arming Achilles, see Barringer (1995) esp. 17–40.

<sup>16</sup> Further, Saverkina (2001).

<sup>17</sup> Trofimova (2007) 277–9, where (as often) the Eleusinian mysteries are brought into discussion.

<sup>18</sup> See, conveniently, Kalashnik (2004) 105–6.

<sup>19</sup> Further, Braund (2010a) where the key text of Pliny is not beyond dispute.

<sup>20</sup> Further, Lada-Richards (1999); also below p. 272 on the theatrical terracottas etc. at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa.

<sup>21</sup> Ar. *Frogs* 185–7 with Ivantchik (2005) 54 n. 4.





Figure 22 'Tomb of Demeter' at Panticapaeum. © V. N. Zin'ko, Demetra Foundation, Kerch

where her return to life was also key. The woman buried in Tomb 1 might well have been claimed as a new Alcestis (or better)<sup>22</sup>, evidently at home in the company of Heracles, as in the famous play of Euripides, where the possibility of her return from death was realised thanks to that hero – the champion too of Aphrodite Ourania.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Like the woman buried on Amorgos, excelling the virtuous Alcestis and Penelope too: IG XII 7. 494.

<sup>23</sup> Plato, *Symp.* 175b–d shows Alcestis as such a model in the fourth century. Cf. *Anth. Pal.* 7. 691 on the deceased as a new Alcestis, with Calder (1975) on a later instance from Odessus on the west coast

Meanwhile, her body also sported a gold ring which shows not so much Artemis as a statue of a female who seems to be a form of the goddess, complete with bow. Although the ring is classical, the statue may well be archaic, whether actual or imagined.<sup>24</sup> We cannot exclude the possibility that this is (or was taken to be) Parthenos herself, which might begin to satisfy our quest for Parthenos in the Taman region. However, great uncertainty prevails, for she might as well be claimed as (amongst other forms of the deity) Artemis Agrotera, whom we have already seen on the Taman peninsula.<sup>25</sup> With all this in view, none of the various suggestions about the deity served by this so-called ‘priestess’ is persuasive. Claims for Demeter and Kore rest on assumptions about their role in fertility, which might have some bearing in this woman’s burial, but must be balanced by their major role in the larger sphere of life and after-life that underpins their mysteries. The relevance of these goddesses to those vital themes explains too the striking depiction of a bejewelled Demeter (or Kore) *en face* with flowers on the vaulted ceiling of the burial chamber of Tomb 2, which was robbed.<sup>26</sup> The sense of natural fertility, given particularly by the pectoral placed on the deceased’s chest, has led others to claim that she was priestess of the so-called Great Goddess, understood as a fertility deity who might be seen also in appliqués of what seems to be a female deity, winged and with a very stylised lower body – possibly a Scylla, in fact.<sup>27</sup> Be that as it may, we must observe the persistent importance of Demeter in the funereal art of the Bosphoran kingdom, well into the Roman empire. The striking portrait of Demeter from the so-called Tomb of Demeter in Roman imperial Panticapaeum shows the stylistic change that had occurred over the centuries, but that was a superficial matter when set against the continuity in thought and practice between her and the portrait of Tomb 2 at Bol’shaya Bliznitsa, both replete with emotions and evocations.<sup>28</sup>

of the Black Sea. On Alcestis, Bendis and Thrace, see Braund (2017a). On Dionysus in the Bosphoran kingdom, see also Braund (2017b) on Taman, and Moleva (2017) on the Crimean Dionysus.

<sup>24</sup> See Williams and Ogden (1994) 193; Kalashnik (2004).

<sup>25</sup> See p. 101.

<sup>26</sup> Trofimova (2007) 270, fig. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Trofimova (2007) 279 on these and others at Bol’shaya Bliznitsa and elsewhere around the region. The deity is often linked (rather awkwardly) with the anguipede ancestress of the Scythians, on the local Greek notion of their origins, as reported by Herodotus: 4. 8–10; cf. e.g. Ustinova (2005). Further, Skinner (2012), 171; Ogden (2013). Meanwhile, the search for non-Greek notions persists among scholars: e.g. Shaub (2007) 359; Popova (2011).

<sup>28</sup> See Cohen (2010), esp. 200–3 (after Rostovtzeff); Zin’ko (2009) offers a detailed and well illustrated study of the Tomb of Demeter.

Claims for Aphrodite depend upon locale and depictions of her with Eros on two rings and a mirror-case. The Heracles appliquéés are accompanied in this burial by a pelike showing Heracles once more, in a scene with the centaur Nessus and Deianeira, with Dionysus, maenad and satyr on the other side. The vessel reminds us of the hero's death and thus may also evoke the after-life which followed. While big themes of life after death can be traced, however, it seems wise to move away from interpretation of these burials in terms of the priesthood of the deceased, for which there is really no evidence. We do better to consider the broader significances of these various divine images to the burial as a whole, chosen for deposition by those who buried the deceased, very likely in no random manner.<sup>29</sup> For Demeter and Kore are appropriate to any burial, while Artemis (like the calathus) and Aphrodite can also suit traditional notions of female virtue and womanhood, such as we sometimes find expressed in words on women's gravestones. They also each have a major role in the natural world, for example in fertility, reproduction or hunting. Meanwhile, Heracles not only suits burial in the ways we have seen, but might even be taken to support and protect women in time of need in this specific locality close to Apatouron, even if he might often appear as far from gallant elsewhere. It is a great pity that the pine sarcophagus in which the deceased was placed has survived only in fragments. Its wealth need not surprise us, including ivory decoration, but its design in the form of a columned building, perhaps a temple, is more interesting.

Despite this array of uncertainty and false starts, this remarkable burial at least offers a sidelight on our central concern, the role of forms of Artemis and Aphrodite Ourania in Bosporan society. The grave goods seem to cluster around two principal themes which could not be more relevant to the deposition of the burial, when these goods were selected and placed in the burial. On the one hand, there is the sustained theme of the female. That is valuable, and we should be rather slower to chase notions of priesthoods and the like. This wealthy woman of the Bosporan elite was deposited with a range of female images – Aphrodite and Artemis, Amazons, Demeter and Kore and Nereids, probably Thetis. The deceased was surrounded by these images of powerful women, who represented the gamut of female virtues: the maidenhood of armed Artemis, the motherhood of Aphrodite (evoked by the presence of Eros) and Demeter. As for Thetis, mother of Achilles, we must observe that the provision of equipment by mother to

<sup>29</sup> On burials of 'priestesses' here and across the region, see further Meyer (2013) 284. On the excavations at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa, see the well-illustrated account of Sudarev (2010).

son was a recurrent theme of motherly care and support in Greek thought, practised by other mothers too.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, there was also the theme of death and the hope of its survival through immortality. Heracles had famously had a mortal death and become immortal. As the only male in the burial,<sup>31</sup> his importance is clear enough, especially when we see him next to Demeter and Kore and also repeated on the pelike, which those who made the burial had singled out for deposition. Its theme might seem awkward, especially if a husband had predeceased the buried woman. After all, Nessus was to 'kill' Heracles through his wife Deianeira's ill-starred love for him. But surely that was not the intended line of interpretation. More to the point was allusion to the death that Heracles would in fact survive and perhaps also to the passionate commitment of his wife, another aspect of the womanly virtue on display in the burial.<sup>32</sup> And at the same time, as in the Apatouron myth, we find Heracles as protector of a virtuous female (Deianeira, in place of Ourania) against a would-be rapist (the centaur Nessus in place of the Giants). Further, while Nereids are familiar as escorts of the dead,<sup>33</sup> Thetis herself was not only Achilles' mother, but the principal organiser and mourner at his burial on Leuke, where he too would achieve immortality. Moreover, there was the immortality that resided in the production of children, especially children as remarkable as Kore, Eros and Achilles. Therefore, Tomb 1 at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa presents a vision of virtuous womanhood, including motherhood, which is brought together with imagery of the conquest of death, not least by motherhood itself. Finally, the imagery of burgeoning nature suits both themes well enough, linking easily with the fertility of reproduction and the hope of life in death. So too the unusual array of terracottas, some of which have shocked scholars with delicate sensibilities. The evident Dionysiac and theatrical element among them, together with the Dionysiac scene on the pelike, have drawn the Eleusinian mysteries into scholarly consideration. Reasonably so, perhaps, but we should be clear that these were a specifically Athenian phenomenon, located at Eleusis. The broader point here holds good, however, that these Dionysiac themes (possibly to be linked too with the gold appliqués of dancers repeated on the clothing of the deceased) bring a significant element of his rites to bear as well,

<sup>30</sup> Davies (2007) explicates this in detail.

<sup>31</sup> With the (apparently) trivial exceptions of isolated appliqués of Helios and the horse Pegasus.

<sup>32</sup> On the virtues of Deianeira, see Foley (2001) 95–7.

<sup>33</sup> In detail, Barringer (1995).

for (not only at Eleusis) these centred too upon the survival of death.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly we also find elsewhere the habit of including in grave deposits terracottas, vases and other images entailing theatrical and other Dionysiac themes, as famously on the Lipari islands.<sup>35</sup> In the Bosporan kingdom, as in much of southern Italy, there was a strong enough theatrical culture in the later fourth century BC, when goods were deposited in Tomb 1 at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa.<sup>36</sup> In view of all this, and our extended discussion of Isis as Demeter besides, we should allow some credence to Orosius' story that Mithridates Eupator was performing the rites of Demeter in the Bosporan kingdom on the eve of his demise.<sup>37</sup> He may well have been at Panticapaeum, where her priestesses are attested from the fourth century BC, while her Thesmophoria is implied around 300 BC.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, Demeter is much harder to find in the Asiatic Bosporus, where there is no sign at all of her in epigraphy.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, we have no hard knowledge of those who selected these goods for deposition, including a fine calathus which was more likely (in view of the present considerations) to have been seen as another kind of womanhood, Amazonomachy. Especially so as Greeks are shown fighting Amazons on a phalera among the bronze horse-gear that was also deposited in Tomb 1.<sup>40</sup> However, those who created the burial – and publicly expended considerable wealth in so doing – were doubtless relations, very likely with a husband and children to the fore. It is not hard to imagine that these presiding relations were pleased with their strong display of womanly virtue and potential immortality, which flattered them, impressed their community and also gave them hope. Presumably the deceased 'priestess' of Tomb 1 had much in common with the rich local woman (who was likewise probably a wealthy Bosporan of the Taman), whom Demosthenes' grandfather

<sup>34</sup> On these terracottas, Peredol'skaya (1955) with Braund (2012) on the irrelevance of Kabeiroi; cf. Minns (1913) 428 on their perverted obscenity(!). The griffin, frequent enough in funereal contexts, had various associations which included Dionysus: we should note the terracotta of a griffin-riding maenad in particular: see Tolstoy and Kondakov (1889) 51 (illustrated). In general, Simon (1962); Delplace (1980).

<sup>35</sup> MacLachlan (2012), esp. 350–1.

<sup>36</sup> Braund and Hall (2014).

<sup>37</sup> *Against the pagans* 6. 5: an earthquake portended his doom, which soon followed.

<sup>38</sup> Priestesses: CIRB 8 (Kreousa); 14 (Aristonike). Cf. CIRB 18 (also from Panticapaeum), a dedication to Demeter Thesmophoros. Earlier, a late fifth-century plaque from Panticapaeum is taken to show her cult in action: Trofimova (2007) 41. Note also a graffito: Tolstoy (1953) no. 167. Modern scholars link a range of structures with her: e.g. Beregovoye 4, Vestnik and so on, Shaub (2007), esp. 353–9.

<sup>39</sup> Shaub (2007) 356–8 interestingly suggests that Ourania may have absorbed her functions there, but Bol'shaya Bliznitsa might lead us rather to suspect the accidents of epigraphic survival are at work.

<sup>40</sup> Further, Treister (2004). Such equipment is not unusual in Bosporan elite burials (further, Trofimova (2007) 222), though the modern claim of Scythian influence is easily overstated.

Gylon had married, apparently at nearby Cepi, before sending their two daughters in search of good husbands in Athens. Aeschines' attempt to make Gylon's wife a Scythian is typical enough of Athenian rhetoric, a slander designed to build his attack on the supposedly Scythian, blood-thirsty nature of his great enemy, Demosthenes, her grandson. Such talk, however, gives us a hint of the kind of insult that even the Bosporan elite might have to handle in their dealings with communities and individuals who considered themselves to be more properly Greek.<sup>44</sup>

While an element of hypothesis is inevitable, this kind of interpretation accords very well with Bosporan funerary imagery in general. In Tomb 1 at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa we have a rare and invaluable glimpse of elite ideology in Bosporan society of the later fourth century BC. True, it is isolated, but we have already observed a measure of similarity in the elite burial practice of the northeast Crimea at the beginning of the fourth century, where images of Heracles (including a scene on a pelike) were also key to the burial at the great mound of Baksy. Unfortunately the partial robbing of goods from that burial obstructs any close comparisons with Tomb 1 at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa. However, the similarities between the myth and practice at Apatouron, on the one hand, and the conceptions inherent in Tomb 1 are clear and striking. All the more so, if we consider their physical proximity. Parenthood and the production of children within virtuous order prevails in Tomb 1 as it did at Apatouron. At each of these neighbouring locations the wild rapist is despatched by the culture-hero Heracles, whether it be centaur or Giants. And we have seen how these two themes are different sides of the same coin insofar as the slaughter of rapist(s) was the assurance of ordered reproduction. On those grounds we may reasonably see much more than coincidence. The important point here is that the textual and epigraphical evidence for Apatouron reveals the same pattern of thought as that displayed in the archaeological remains at Tomb 1, indeed, quite literally displayed at the funeral when the deposition was made. In that way the burial ritual echoed the ritual at Apatouron, which is unknown to us in detail, but evidently had its roots in the myth there. In other words, the same creative process, in the interest of order and the elite that oversaw it, was at work in the creation of this local myth and the selection of the grave goods. While we have no real reason to think that the deceased of Tomb 1 was buried as a priestess, it remains more than likely that this elite lady had played a part in the cult at Apatouron, where she may well have been at some stage even a priestess.

<sup>44</sup> Aeschin. 3, esp. 171–3, with Braund (2003).



Of course, there was also the obvious difference between the context of a burial and the concerns of Ourania at Apatouron. While at Apatouron Heracles lay hidden in a fold of the earth (*keuthmōn*), in Tomb 1 his importance lay in his physical journeying to and from the underworld and his passage too from mortality through death to immortality. We have seen how that entailed also Demeter and Kore, embroiled in their own myth of Kore's passage to and fro. The Dionysiac aspects of all this, embedded in cult (at Athens, the Eleusinian mysteries, entailing also Heracles) and played out in theatre festival (in tragedy, comedy and indeed satyr-play too), were expressed especially by the terracottas in Tomb 1. These connections between Demeter, Kore, Heracles and so on are well understood in just those terms by scholars who study them in the context of Dionysiac drama and festival at Athens.<sup>42</sup> Since Bosporans had their own theatres and festivals to match, they were clearly aware of all this by the fourth century – with or without any particular thought of the practices of the Athenians, though those too will have been familiar to some. This burial of a 'Bosporan Alcestis' (to coin a phrase) is, therefore, yet another illustration of the ways in which the Bosporans shared in broader Greek – and especially Ionian – culture.

### Social and Political Order

In that way Tomb 1 at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa is to the fore among the exceptional instances where archaeology contributes substantially to our subject. Otherwise we are left largely with a scatter of inscribed stones (with or without images) and dedications, including what may well be the earliest extant depiction of Artemis Ephesia, from sixth-century Panticapaeum. Although the extraordinary object is beset with unanswerable questions about its route from strainer-handle to dedication in the Bosporus or elsewhere, it furnished us, nevertheless, with an angle from which to consider the larger question of the goddess in colonial space, as far afield as the western Mediterranean. While there appears to be no basis for recent suggestions of Ephesian colonialism, we saw how the cult linked the Bosporus far and wide, not least to Asia Minor, as it certainly developed in the north Black Sea in the fourth century BC.

Meanwhile, we explored the multiple connections also between Isis and Io, including Isis' range of Greek counterparts from Demeter through Artemis to Aphrodite. We were able to establish not only a larger

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Foley (2001), esp. 308 on Heracles. Cf. too on 'cultic theatres', Nielsen (2002).



context for the Isis ship painted on the wall in what may be a temple of Aphrodite at Nymphaeum, but also to posit its place within Bosporan religion and the likely celebration there, as elsewhere around the Black Sea of the cult of the Ploiaphesia. Interpretation of the Bosporan concern with the Ptolemies thereby changed, from unsupported assertions of shared Bosporan-Ptolemaic economic interests and unattested political interactions, towards explanation in terms of religion and the spread of the cult of Isis, with or without her accompanying Serapis and Anubis.

In particular, we saw how the identification of Isis with Io gave the Bosporans a particular stake in Egypt, where Io had ended the rampage that took her across the straits between the Crimea and Taman. Yet another crossing, then, but one with an intriguing chronology. For we observed how Spartocid interest in Isis-Io in inter-state diplomacy was not carried through into visible concern with Io at home in the Bosphorus until the advent of new Bosporan rulers with the Principate. It was only at that stage – at least on the present evidence – that Io became visible in the Bosporan kingdom itself. Roman taste and the value of Io as a means to impress in Rome may be part of the explanation, though Spartocid attitudes to her remain hard to understand. At the same time, these considerations enabled a series of new explanations of old problems. There was a point to the new tendency of inscribing the kingdom as *Boos poros* ('Oxford') in a Roman imperial environment where Io was in fashion. Suddenly we could also understand the much-debated fountain-inscription of the first century AD, near Baksy, as a poetic mark of Cotys I's claim to Inachid succession. That conceit entailed not only Argos where Io's father, Inachis, had presided, but much of the known world, so that Cotys' sense of his own importance seems to have matched the famous haughtiness of his hostile brother, Mithridates VIII, when put on display at Rome by Claudius. As for the Spartocids, we saw how their dealings with the early Ptolemies, at least, incorporated the deity that was Io-Isis. Accordingly, a new interpretation of the much-discussed London papyrus emerged, which gave us a broader sense of a Bosporan delegation that toured the Fayum and its crocodiles in the middle of the third century BC.

This book has taken us far and wide in its themes and in its geographical scope. Throughout, however, there has been a sharp focus on forms of Artemis and Aphrodite Ourania within the Bosporan kingdom. Repeatedly we have seen how the crossing of the central straits was a major theme around these deities, so that they offered a geographical and social coherence to a kingdom that was peculiarly dislocated by geography and populations. While much of Bosporan religion remains elusive or simply

unknown, we can now see how these particularly important religious strands bound the kingdom together and supported a social order over which its elite presided. They helped to render the straits not so much an obstacle as a different kind of connection, especially east–west but also north–south, linking the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, the ancient Maeotis. This major waterway – together with the muddled and marshy waters that created islands in the Taman peninsula – gave not only a name to the Bosphorans, but a whole pattern and mode of economic and social life in which crossing the waters was a recurrent theme. As we saw with the great temple of Artemis at Ephesus, cults might be about economy as well as society and politics. In the Bosphoran case, we lack appropriate evidence, but there must be at least the strong suspicion that the key cult-centre at Apatouron accrued, held and deployed substantial wealth. If we are right to see the head of Aphrodite Ourania on Bosphoran coinage under the early Principate, that is perhaps the clearest declaration of her particular importance in the society, economy and politics of the kingdom, both for the Bosphorans themselves and for the Romans and the many others around the ancient world with whom the Bosphorans dealt.

In Greek ideology Aphrodite and Artemis can often represent two competing forces in the world, which we might understand as sex and its avoidance. A famous exploration of that polarity is another play of Euripides, *Hippolytus*. Of course, that play has a Black Sea element insofar as Hippolytus was born of an Amazon whom Theseus, his father, had brought back as his wife from the southeastern Pontus. However, the sense of opposition between the two goddesses is not localised in any way. On the contrary, this is a key tension within Greek social and religious thought. Accordingly, we should understand that Artemis and Aphrodite may also have a great deal in common too, for both are aspects of Nature and indeed human nature, as *Hippolytus* illustrates, not for the first time.<sup>43</sup> Therefore tension does not amount to alienation, especially where we are concerned with Aphrodite Orania, as in the key cult of the Bosphoran kingdom. As we have seen, Plato's famous distinction between her kind of love and that of Aphrodite Pandemos may well be unsatisfactory, but we have observed how Ourania's cult in the Bosphorus seems to be kept distinct from other cults of Aphrodite there, notably at Cepi and possibly Nymphaeum. That Bosphoran distinction and Plato's theorising together serve to underline the role of Ourania that we have seen so strongly represented in her Bosphoran cult. This is an Aphrodite who does not flout the virginity of Artemis, but

<sup>43</sup> E.g. Segal (1965), esp. 121.

instead offers respectability, whether an alternative path or an ordered progression from virginity to sex in marriage, reproduction and motherhood. How far Bosporans pondered all this after the manner of a Plato may be doubted, though we have in fact already observed the sustained social, political, economic and cultural interaction of the kingdom with Athens. There were certainly those in the fourth-century BC Bosphorus who knew about Plato and the ideas explored at Athens more generally, quite apart from philosophy closer to home. Be that as it may, the Platonic formulation should help us to grasp how the two deities (Aphrodite Ourania and Artemis in her various guises) could function together as cohesive forces in the Bosphorus. The tension between them in no way threatened that cohesion, but rather extended the scope and power of their contribution to Bosporan order.

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